

The Voice of Belgium



Being the War Utterances
of
CARDINAL MERCIER

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THE VOICE OF BELGIUM



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BEING THE WAR UTTERANCES

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WITH A PREFACE BY

CARDINAL BOURNE

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PREFACE

History hardly shows us a country more terribly tried than Belgium has been in the last three years. Peaceful, thrifty, seemingly outside the region of strife of the great European powers, no country has a greater right to undisturbed possession and enjoyment of freedom and self-government.

Ruthless might, unhampered by any thought or recognition of plighted word or national obligations, has inflicted on the Belgian people a martyrdom the memory of which can never wholly pass away. That martyrdom has brought to light hidden heroism, and has revealed courage unsurpassed in any conflict of the past.

Two names will ever stand forth on the page of history, those of the dauntless King of the Belgians, and of the intrepid Primate of Belgium, the Cardinal Archbishop of Malines.

There were many even in Belgium itself who heard with astonishment in 1906 that the President of the Institute of Thomistic Philosophy in the University of Louvain was called to the Primatial

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See. It was true that Mgr. Mercier had exercised for many years a strong influence, direct and indirect, on the intellectual life of his country. No one indeed had done more to create and to make known the strong, alert, ever-spreading, and, in every good sense modern, intellectual life of that Catholic University. But in the popular mind the learned Prelate was associated with speculation rather than with action, with the chair of the professor and not with the external work of a great diocese.

Even, if the horrors of war had never fallen upon Belgium, the choice of the Holy See would long ago have been justified. The eight years from 1906 to 1914 showed that the Archdiocese of Malines possessed a Pastor who was a very master of all the details of his sacred charge. The training of ecclesiastical students, the external work of the parochial clergy together with the maintenance of high spiritual ideals as the foundation of that work, the great social questions of the day, all received from Cardinal Mercier a wise, prudent, and enlightened direction. Even if the war had never supervened, his Episcopate would have been of special excellence and renown.

But it was the tragic events beginning in August,

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1914, and not yet ended, that showed forth what the Providence of God had foreseen, prepared, and willed in calling Mgr. Mercier to the first place in the Episcopate of Belgium. At a moment when sound principles and inflexible courage were needed in full measure to defend the rights of the sanctuary, to uphold the steadfastness of the Clergy, to protect the defenceless, God gave both abundantly to the chief pastor of the Belgian Church. The long years of study and teaching at Louvain were now to bear their fruit. The supernatural fortitude drawn from the Altar of the Daily Sacrifice in long years of priestly life would now support the allied cause throughout the world, and strike dumb the foe. The pastoral letters and allocutions of the Archbishop of Malines, now published in our language, are the public utterance of the brave heart of a learned man, who by his exhortations ever based on sound philosophical and theological principles, has done more to shatter the power of German strength and thought than any one other supporter of our cause. Probably when the true balance can be struck, these written or spoken words will be found to have accomplished more than many thousands of armed troops.

To one who thirty-four years ago was privileged

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to be the pupil of so great a teacher, and who in later years has been allowed an ever growing intimacy and friendship with his fellow-member of the Priesthood and Episcopate, and of the Sacred College, no more grateful task could be given than to write these few words of introduction to the English translation of an undying work.

FRANCIS CARDINAL BOURNE,
Archbishop of Westminster.



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Patriotism and Endurance

Christmas, 1914.

MY VERY DEAR BRETHREN,

I CANNOT tell you how instant and how present the thought of you has been to me throughout the months of suffering and of mourning through which we have passed. I had to leave you abruptly on the 20th of August in order to fulfil my last duty towards the beloved and venerated Pope whom we have lost, and in order to discharge an obligation of conscience from which I could not dispense myself, in the election of the successor of Pius the Tenth, the Pontiff who now directs the Church under the title, full of promise and of hope, of Benedict the Fifteenth.

It was in Rome itself that I received the tidings—stroke after stroke—of the partial destruction of the Collegiate church of Louvain, next of the burning of the Library and of the scientific laboratories of our great University and of the devastation of the city, and next of the wholesale shooting of citizens, and tortures inflicted upon

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women and children, and upon unarmed and undefended men. And while I was still under the shock of these calamities the telegraph brought us news of the bombardment of our beautiful metropolitan church, of the church of Notre Dame au delà la Dyle, of the episcopal palace, and of a great part of our dear city of Malines.

Afar from my diocese, without means of communication with you, I was compelled to lock my grief within my own afflicted heart, and to carry it, with the thought of you, which never left me, to the foot of the Crucifix.

I craved courage and light, and sought them in such thoughts as these : A disaster has visited the world, and our beloved little Belgium, a nation so faithful in the great mass of her population to God, so upright in her patriotism, so noble in her King and Government, is the first sufferer. She bleeds ; her sons are stricken down, within her fortresses, and upon her fields, in defence of her rights and of her territory. Soon there will not be one Belgian family not in mourning. Why all this sorrow, my God ? Lord, Lord, hast Thou forsaken us ? Then I looked upon the Crucifix. I looked upon Jesus, most gentle and humble Lamb of God, crushed, clothed in His blood as in a garment, and I thought I heard from His own mouth the words which the Psalmist uttered in His name : " O God, my God, look upon me ; why hast

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Thou forsaken me? O my God, I shall cry, and Thou wilt not hear." And forthwith the murmur died upon my lips; and I remembered what Our Divine Saviour said in His gospel: "The disciple is not above the master, nor the servant above his lord." The Christian is the servant of a God who became man in order to suffer and to die. To rebel against pain, to revolt against Providence, because it permits grief and bereavement, is to forget whence we came, the school in which we have been taught, the example that each of us carries graven in the name of a Christian, which each of us honours at his hearth, contemplates at the altar of his prayers, and of which he desires that his tomb, the place of his last sleep, shall bear the sign.

My dearest Brethren, I shall return by and by to the providential law of suffering, but you will agree that since it has pleased a God made man, who was holy, innocent, without stain, to suffer and to die for us who are sinners, who are guilty, who are perhaps criminals, it ill becomes us to complain whatever we may be called upon to endure. The truth is that no disaster on earth, striking creatures only, is comparable with that which our sins provoked, and whereof God Himself chose to be the blameless victim.

Having recalled to mind this fundamental truth, I find it easier to summon you to face what has

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befallen us, and to speak to you simply and directly of what is your duty, and of what may be your hope. That duty I shall express in two words: Patriotism and Endurance.

Patriotism.

My dearest Brethren, I desire to utter, in your name and my own, the gratitude of those whose age, vocation, and social conditions cause them to benefit by the heroism of others, without bearing in it any active part.

When, immediately on my return from Rome, I went to Havre to greet our Belgian, French and English wounded; when, later at Malines, at Louvain, at Antwerp, it was given to me to take the hands of those brave men who carried a bullet in their flesh, a wound on their forehead, because they had marched to the attack of the enemy, or borne the shock of his onslaught, it was a word of gratitude to them that rose to my lips. "O valiant friends," I said, "it was for us, it was for each one of us, it was for me, that you risked your lives and are now in pain. I am moved to tell you of my respect, of my thankfulness, to assure you that the whole nation knows how much she is in debt to you."

For in truth our soldiers are our saviours.

A first time, at Liège, they saved France; a

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second time, in Flanders, they arrested the advance of the enemy upon Calais. France and England know it; and Belgium stands before them both, and before the entire world, as a nation of heroes. Never before in my whole life did I feel so proud to be a Belgian as when, on the platforms of French stations, and halting a while in Paris, and visiting London, I was witness of the enthusiastic admiration our allies feel for the heroism of our army. Our King is, in the esteem of all, at the very summit of the moral scale; he is doubtless the only man who does not recognise that fact, as simple as the simplest of his soldiers, he stands in the trenches and puts new courage, by the serenity of his face, into the hearts of those of whom he requires that they shall not doubt of their country. The foremost duty of every Belgian citizen at this hour is gratitude to the army.

If any man had rescued you from shipwreck or from a fire, you would assuredly hold yourselves bound to him by a debt of everlasting thankfulness. But it is not one man, it is two hundred and fifty thousand men who fought, who suffered, who fell for you so that you might be free, so that Belgium might keep her independence, her dynasty, her patriotic unity; so that after the vicissitudes of battle, she might rise nobler, purer, more erect, and more glorious than before.

Pray daily, my Brethren, for these two hundred

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and fifty thousand, and for their leaders to victory ; pray for our brothers in arms ; pray for the fallen ; pray for those who are still engaged ; pray for the recruits who are making ready for the fight to come.

In your name I send them the greeting of our fraternal sympathy and our assurance that not only do we pray for the success of their arms and for the eternal welfare of their souls, but that we also accept for their sake all the distress, whether physical or moral, that falls to our own share in the oppression that hourly besets us, and all that the future may have in store for us, in humiliation for a time, in anxiety, and in sorrow. In the day of final victory we shall all be in honour ; it is just that to-day we should all be in grief.

To judge by certain rumours that have reached me, I gather that from districts that have had least to suffer, some bitter words have arisen towards our God, words which, if spoken with cold calculation, would be not far from blasphemous.

Oh all too easily do I understand how natural instinct rebels against the evils that have fallen upon Catholic Belgium ; the spontaneous thought of mankind is ever that virtue should have its instantaneous crown, and injustice its immediate retribution. But the ways of God are not our ways, the Scripture tells us. Providence gives free course, for a time measured by Divine wisdom, to

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human passions and the conflict of desires. God, being eternal, is patient. The last word is the word of mercy, and it belongs to those who believe in love. "Why art thou sad, O my soul? and why dost thou disquiet me? *Quare tristis es anima mea, et quare conturbas me?* Hope in God. Bless Him always; is He not thy Saviour and thy God? *Spera in Deo quoniam adhuc confitebor illi, salutare vultus mei et Deus meus.*"

When holy Job, whom God presented as an example of constancy to the generations to come, had been stricken, blow upon blow, by Satan, with the loss of his children, of his goods, of his health, his enemies approached him with provocations to discouragement; his wife urged upon him a blasphemy and a curse. "Dost thou still continue in thy simplicity? Curse God, and die." But the man of God was unshaken in his confidence, "And he said to her: Thou hast spoken like one of the foolish women: if we have received good things at the hand of God, why should we not receive evil? The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away. As it hath pleased the Lord so is it done. Blessed be the name of the Lord. *Dominus dedit, Dominus abstulit; sicut Domino placuit ita factum est. Sit nomen Domini benedictum.*" And experience proved that saintly one to be right. It pleased the Lord to recompense, even here below, His faithful servant. "The Lord gave Job twice as

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much as he had before. And for his sake God pardoned his friends."

Better than any other man, perhaps, do I know what our unhappy country has undergone. Nor will any Belgian, I trust, doubt of what I suffer in my soul, as a citizen and as a Bishop, in sympathy with all this sorrow. These last four months have seemed to me age-long. By thousands have our brave ones been mown down; wives, mothers, are weeping for those they shall not see again; hearths are desolate; dire poverty spreads, anguish increases. At Malines, at Antwerp, the people of two great cities have been given over, the one for six hours, the other for thirty-four hours, of a continuous bombardment, to the throes of death. I have traversed the greater part of the districts most terribly devastated in my diocese;¹ and the ruins I beheld, and the ashes, were more dreadful than I, prepared by the saddest of forebodings, could have imagined. Other parts of my diocese, which I have not yet had time to visit,² have in like

¹ Duffel, Lierre, Berlaer Saint Rombaut, Konings-Hoyckt, Mortsel, Waelhem, Muysen, Wavre Sainte Catherine, Wavre Notre-Dame, Sempst, Weerde, Eppeghen, Hofstade, Elewyt, Rymenam, Boort-Meerbeek, Wespelaer, Haecht, Werchter-Wackerzeel, Rotselaer, Tremeloo; Louvain and its suburban environs, Blauwput, Kessel-Loo, Boven-Loo, Linden, Herent, Thildonck, Bueken, Relst, Aerschot, Wesemael, Hersselt, Diest, Schaffen, Molenstede, Rillaer, Gelrode.

² Haekendover, Roosbeek, Boutersem, Budingen, Neerlinder, Ottignies, Mousty, Wavre, Beyghem, Capelle-au-Bois,

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manner been laid waste. Churches, schools, asylums, hospitals, convents in great numbers, are in ruins. Entire villages have all but disappeared. At Werchter-Wackerzeel, for instance, out of three hundred and eighty homes, a hundred and thirty remain; at Tremeloo two-thirds of the village are overthrown; at Bueken out of a hundred houses twenty are standing; at Schaffen one hundred and eighty-nine houses out of two hundred are destroyed—eleven still stand. At Louvain the third part of the buildings are down; one thousand and seventy-four dwellings have disappeared; on the town land and in the suburbs, one thousand eight hundred and twenty-three houses have been burnt.

In this dear city of Louvain, perpetually in my thoughts, the magnificent church of St. Peter will never recover its former splendour. The ancient college of St. Ives, the art-schools, the consular and commercial schools of the University, the old markets, our rich library with its collections, its unique and unpublished manuscripts, its archives, its gallery of great portraits of illustrious rectors, chancellors, professors, dating from the time of its foundation, which preserved for masters and students alike a noble tradition and were an incitement in their studies—all this accumulation of intellectual, of historic, and of artistic riches, the

Humbeek, Nieuwenrode, Liezele, Londerzeel, Heyndonck, Mariekerke, Weert, Blaesvelt.

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fruit of the labours of five centuries—all is reduced to dust.

Many a parish lost its pastor. There is now sounding in my ears the sorrowful voice of an old man of whom I asked whether he had had Mass on Sunday in his battered church. "It is two months," he said, "since we had a church." The parish priest and the curate had been interned in a concentration camp.

Thousands of Belgian citizens have in like manner been deported to the prisons of Germany, to Munsterlagen, to Celle, to Magdeburg. At Munsterlagen alone three thousand one hundred civil prisoners were numbered. History will tell of the physical and moral torments of their long martyrdom. Hundreds of innocent men were shot. I possess no complete necrology; but I know that there were ninety-one shot at Aerschot, and that there, under pain of death, their fellow citizens were compelled to dig their graves. In the Louvain group of communes one hundred and seventy-six persons, men and women, old men and sucklings, rich and poor, in health and sickness, were shot or burnt.

In my diocese alone I know that thirteen priests or religious were put to death.¹ One of these, the

¹ Their brothers in religion or in the priesthood will wish to know their names. Here they are: Dupierreux, of the Society of Jesus; Brothers Sebastian and Allard of the Congregation of the Josephites; Brother Candide of the Congregation of the

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parish priest of Gelrode, suffered, I believe, a veritable martyrdom. I made a pilgrimage to his grave, and, amid the little flock which so lately he had been feeding with the zeal of an apostle, there did I pray to him that from the height of Heaven he would guard his parish, his diocese, his country.

We can neither number our dead nor compute the measure of our ruins. And what would it be if we turned our sad steps towards Liège, Namur,²

Brothers of Mercy; Father Maximin, Capuchin, and Father Vincent, Conventual; Lombaerts, parish priest at Boven-Loo; Goris, parish priest at Autgaerden; Carette, professor at the Episcopal college at Louvain; De Clerck, parish priest at Bueken; Dergent, parish priest at Gelrode; Wouters Jean, parish priest at Pont-Brûlé. We have reason to believe that the parish priest of Hérent, Van Bladel, an old man of seventy-one, was also killed; until now, however, his body has not been found.

² I have said that thirteen ecclesiastics had been shot within the diocese of Malines. There were, to my own actual personal knowledge, more than thirty in the dioceses of Namur, Tournai, and Liège: Schlögel, parish priest of Hastière; Gille, parish priest of Couvin; Pieret, curate at Etalle; Alexandre, curate at Mussy-la-Ville; Maréchal, seminarist at Maissin; the Reverend Father Gillett, Benedictine of Maredsous; the Reverend Father Nicolas, Premonstratensian of the Abbey of Leffe; two Brothers of the same Abbey; one Brother of the Congregation of Oblates; Poskin, parish priest of Surice; Hotlet, parish priest of Les Alloux; Georges, parish priest of Tintigny; Glouden, parish priest of Latour; Zenden, retired parish priest at Latour; Jacques, a priest; Druet, parish priest of Acoz; Pollart, parish priest of Roselies; Labeye, parish priest of Blegny-Trembleur; Thielen, parish priest of Haccourt; Janssen, parish priest of Heure le Romain; Chabot, parish priest of Forêt; Dossogne, parish priest of Hockay; Reussonnet, curate of Olme; Bilande, chaplain of the institute of Deaf Mutes at Bouge; Docq, a priest, and others.

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Audenne, Dinant, Tamines, Charleroi, and elsewhere?

And where lives were not taken, and where buildings were not thrown down, what anguish unrevealed! Families, hitherto living at ease, now in bitter want; all commerce at an end, all careers ruined; industry at a standstill; thousands upon thousands of working-men without employment; working-women, shop-girls, humble servant-girls without the means of earning their bread; and poor souls forlorn on the bed of sickness and fever, crying, "O Lord, how long, how long?"

There is nothing to reply. The reply remains the secret of God.

Yes, dearest Brethren, it is the secret of God. He is the master of events and the sovereign director of the human race. "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof: the world and all they that dwell therein. *Domini est terra et plenitudo ejus; orbis terrarum et universi qui habitant in eo.*" The first relation between the creature and his Creator is that of absolute dependence. The very being of the creature is dependent; dependent are his nature, his faculties, his acts, his works. At every passing moment that dependence is renewed, is incessantly re-asserted, inasmuch as, without the will of the Almighty, existence of the first single instant would vanish before the next. Adoration, which is the recog-

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dition of the sovereignty of God, is not, therefore, a fugitive act, it is the permanent state of a being conscious of his own origin. On every page of the Scriptures Jehovah affirms His sovereign dominion. The whole economy of the Old Law, the whole history of the Chosen People, tend to the same end—to maintain Jehovah upon His throne and to cast idols down. I am the first and the last. “I am the Lord, and there is none else; there is no God beside me. I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create evil. Woe to him that gainsayeth his maker, a sherd of the earthen pots. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What art thou making, and thy work is without hands? Tell ye, and come, and consult together. A just God and a saviour, there is none beside me.”

Ah, did the proud reason of mankind dream that it could dismiss our God? Did it smile in irony when, through Christ and through His Church, He pronounced the solemn words of expiation and of repentance? Vain of fugitive successes, O light-minded man, full of pleasure and of wealth, hast thou imagined that thou couldst suffice even to thyself? Then was God set aside in oblivion, then was He misunderstood, then was He blasphemed, with acclamation, and by those whose authority, whose influence, whose power had charged them with the duty of causing His great laws and His

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great order to be reversed and obeyed. Anarchy then spread among the lower ranks of mankind, and many sincere consciences were troubled by the evil example. How long, O Lord, they wondered, how long wilt Thou suffer the pride of this iniquity? Or wilt Thou finally justify the impious opinion that Thou carest no more for the work of Thy hands? A shock from a thunderbolt, and behold all human foresight is set at nought. Europe trembles upon the brink of destruction.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

Many are the thoughts that throng the breast of man to-day, and the chief of them all is this: God reveals Himself as the Master. The nations that made the attack, and the nations that are warring in self-defence, alike confess themselves to be in the hand of Him without whom nothing is made, nothing is done. Men long unaccustomed to prayer are turning again to God. Within the army, within the civil world, in public, and within the individual conscience, there is prayer. Nor is that prayer to-day a word learnt by rote, uttered lightly by the lip; it surges from the troubled heart, it takes the form, at the feet of God, of the very sacrifice of life. The being of man is a whole offering to God. This is worship, this is the fulfilment of the primal moral and religious law: the Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and Him only shalt thou serve. And even those who murmur, and whose courage is not

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sufficient for submission to the hand that smites us and saves us, even these implicitly acknowledge God to be the Master, for if they blaspheme Him, they blaspheme Him for His delay in closing with their desires.

But as for us, my Brethren, we will adore Him in the integrity of our souls. Not yet do we see, in all its magnificence, the revelation of His wisdom, but our faith trusts Him with it all. Before His justice we are humble, and in His mercy hopeful. With holy Tobias we know that because we have sinned He has chastised us, but because He is merciful He will save us.

It would perhaps be cruel to dwell upon our guilt now, when we are paying so well and so nobly what we owe. But shall we not confess that we have indeed something to expiate? He who has received much, from him shall much be required. Now, dare we say that the moral and religious standard of our people has risen as its economic prosperity has risen? The observance of Sunday rest, the Sunday Mass, the reverence for marriage, the restraints of modesty—what had you made of these? What, even within Christian families, had become of the simplicity practised by our fathers, what of the spirit of penance, what of respect for authority? And we too, we priests, we religious, I, the Bishop, we whose great mission it is to present in our lives, yet more than in our speech, the Gospel

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of Christ, have we earned the right to speak to our people the word spoken by the apostle to the nations, "Be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ?" We labour indeed, we pray indeed, but it is all too little. We should be, by the very duty of our state, the public expiators for the sins of the world. But which was the thing dominant in our lives—expiation, or our comfort and well-being as citizens? Alas, we have all had times in which we too fell under God's reproach to His people after the escape from Egypt: "The beloved grew fat and kicked, they have provoked me with that which was no god, and I will provoke them with that which is no people." Nevertheless He will save us; for He wills not that our adversaries should boast that they, and not the Eternal, did these things. "See ye that I alone am, and there is no other God beside me. I will kill and I will make to live, I will strike and I will heal."

God will save Belgium, my Brethren, you cannot doubt it.

Nay rather, He is saving her.

Across the smoke of conflagration, across the stream of blood, have you not glimpses, do you not perceive signs, of His love for us? Is there a patriot among us who does not know that Belgium has grown great? Nay, which of us would have the heart to cancel this last page of our national history? Which of us does not exult

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in the brightness of the glory of this shattered nation? When in her throes she brings forth heroes, our Mother Country gives her own energy to the blood of those sons of hers. Let us acknowledge that we needed a lesson in patriotism. There were Belgians, and many such, who wasted their time and their talents in futile quarrels of class with class, of race with race, of passion with personal passion.

Yet when, on the second of August, a mighty foreign power, confident in its own strength and defiant of the faith of treaties, dared to threaten us in our independence, then did all Belgians, without difference of party, or of condition, or of origin, rise up as one man, close-ranged about their own king, and their own government, and cry to the invader: "Thou shalt not go through!"

At once, instantly, we were conscious of our own patriotism. For down within us all is something deeper than personal interests, than personal kinships, than party feeling, and this is the need and the will to devote ourselves to that more general interest which Rome termed the public thing, *Res publica*. And this profound will within us is Patriotism.

Our country is not a mere concourse of persons or of families dwelling on the same soil, having amongst themselves relations, more or less intimate, of business, of neighbourhood, of a com-

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munity of memories, happy or unhappy. Not so ; it is an association of living souls subject to a social organisation to be defended and safeguarded at all costs, even the cost of blood, under the leadership of those presiding over its fortunes. And it is because of this general spirit that the people of a country live a common life in the present, through the past, through the aspirations, the hopes, the confidence in a life to come, which they share together. Patriotism, an internal principle of order and of unity, an organic bond of the members of a nation, was placed by the finest thinkers of Greece and Rome at the head of the natural virtues. Aristotle, the prince of the philosophers of Antiquity, held disinterested service of the City—that is, the State—to be the very ideal of human duty. And the religion of Christ makes of patriotism a positive law ; there is no perfect Christian who is not also a perfect patriot. For our religion exalts the pagan ideal, showing it to be realisable only in the Absolute. Whence, in truth, comes this universal, this irresistible impulse which carries at once the will of the whole nation in one single effort of cohesion and of resistance in face of the hostile menace against her unity and her freedom ? Whence comes it that in an hour all interests were merged in the interest of all, and that all lives were together offered in willing immolation ? Not that

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the State is worth more, essentially, than the individual or the family, seeing that the good of the family and of the individual is the cause and reason of the organisation of the State. Not that our country is a Moloch on whose altar lives may lawfully be sacrificed. The rigidity of pagan morals and the despotism of the Cæsars suggested the false principle—and modern militarism tends to revive it—that the State is omnipotent, and that the discretionary power of the State is the rule of Right. Not so, replies Christian theology, Right is Peace, that is, the interior order of a nation, founded upon Justice. And Justice itself is absolute only because it formulates the essential relation of man with God and of man with man. Moreover, war for the sake of war is a crime. War is justifiable only if it is the necessary means for securing peace. St. Augustine has said: "Peace must not be a preparation for war. And war is not to be made except for the attainment of peace." In the light of this teaching, which is repeated by St. Thomas Aquinas, Patriotism is seen in its religious character. Family interests, class interests, party interests, and the material good of the individual take their place, in the scale of values, below the ideal of Patriotism, for that ideal is Right, which is absolute. Furthermore, that ideal is the public recognition of Right in national matters, and of national Honour. Now

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there is no Absolute except God. God alone, by His sanctity and His sovereignty, dominates all human interests and human wills. And to affirm the absolute necessity of the subordination of all things to Right, to Justice, and to Truth, is implicitly to affirm God.

When, therefore, humble soldiers whose heroism we praise answer us with characteristic simplicity, "We only did our duty," or "We were bound in honour," they express the religious character of their Patriotism. Which of us does not feel that Patriotism is a sacred thing, and that a violation of national dignity is in a manner a profanation and a sacrilege

I was asked lately by a Staff officer whether a soldier falling in a righteous cause—and our cause is such, to demonstration—is not veritably a martyr. Well, he is not a martyr in the rigorous theological meaning of the word, inasmuch as he dies in arms, whereas the martyr delivers himself, undefended and unarmed, into the hands of the executioner. But if I am asked what I think of the eternal salvation of a brave man who has consciously given his life in defence of his country's honour, and in vindication of violated justice, I shall not hesitate to reply that without any doubt whatever Christ crowns his military valour, and that death, accepted in this Christian spirit, assures the safety of that man's soul.

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"Greater love than this no man hath," said Our Saviour, "than a man lay down his life for his friends." And the soldier who dies to save his brothers, and to defend the hearths and altars of his country, reaches this highest of all degrees of charity. He may not have made a close analysis of the value of his sacrifice; but must we suppose that God requires of the plain soldier in the excitement of battle the methodical precision of the moralist or the theologian? Can we who revere his heroism doubt that his God welcomes him with love?

Christian mothers, be proud of your sons. Of all griefs, of all our human sorrows, yours is perhaps the most worthy of veneration. I think I behold you in your affliction, but erect, standing at the side of the Mother of Sorrows, at the foot of the Cross. Suffer us to offer you not only our condolence but our congratulation. Not all our heroes obtain temporal honours, but for all we expect the immortal crown of the elect. For this is the virtue of a single act of perfect charity: it cancels a whole lifetime of sins. It transforms a sinful man into a saint.

Assuredly a great and a Christian comfort is the thought that not only amongst our own men, but in any belligerent army whatsoever, all who in good faith submit to the discipline of their leaders in the service of a cause they believe to be

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righteous, are sharers in the eternal reward of the soldier's sacrifice. And how many may there not be among these young men of twenty who, had they survived, might possibly not have had the resolution to live altogether well, and yet in the impulse of patriotism had the resolution to die so well?

Is it not true, my Brethren, that God has the supreme art of mingling His mercy with His wisdom and His justice? And shall we not acknowledge that if war is a scourge for this earthly life of ours, a scourge whereof we cannot easily estimate the destructive force and the extent, it is also for multitudes of souls an expiation, a purification, a force to lift them to the pure love of their country and to perfect Christian unselfishness?

Endurance.

We may now say, my Brethren, without unworthy pride, that our little Belgium has taken a foremost place in the esteem of nations. I am aware that certain onlookers, notably in Italy and in Holland, have asked how it could be necessary to expose this country to so immense a loss of wealth and of life, and whether a verbal manifesto against hostile aggression, or a single

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cannon-shot on the frontier, would not have served the purpose of protest. But assuredly all men of good feeling will be with us in our rejection of these paltry counsels. Mere utilitarianism is no sufficient rule of Christian citizenship.

On the 19th of April, 1839, a treaty was signed in London by King Leopold, in the name of Belgium, on the one part, and by the Emperor of Austria, the King of France, the Queen of England, the King of Prussia, and the Emperor of Russia on the other; and its seventh article decreed that Belgium should form a separate and perpetually neutral State, and should be held to the observance of this neutrality in regard to all other States. The co-signatories promised, for themselves and their successors, upon their oaths, to fulfil and to observe that treaty in every point and every article without contravention, or tolerance of contravention. Belgium was thus bound in honour to defend her own independence. She kept her oath. The other Powers were bound to respect and to protect her neutrality. Germany violated her oath; England kept hers.

These are the facts.

The laws of conscience are sovereign laws. We should have acted unworthily had we evaded our obligation by a mere feint of resistance. And now we would not rescind our first resolution; we exult in it. Being called upon to write a most

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solemn page in the history of our country, we resolved that it should be also a sincere, also a glorious page. And as long as we are required to give proof of endurance, so long we shall endure.

All classes of our citizens have devoted their sons to the cause of their country; but the poorer part of the population have set the noblest example, for they have suffered also privation, cold, and famine. If I may judge of the general feeling from what I have witnessed in the humbler quarters of Malines, and in the most cruelly afflicted districts of my diocese, the people are energetic in their endurance. They look to be righted; they will not hear of surrender.

Affliction is, in the hand of Divine Omnipotence, a two-edged sword. It wounds the rebellious, it sanctifies him who is willing to endure.

God proveth us, as St. James has told us, but He "is not a tempter of evils." All that comes from Him is good, a ray of light, a pledge of love. "But every man is tempted by his own concupiscence. . . . Blessed is he that endureth temptation, for when he hath been proved he shall receive the crown of life, which God hath promised to them that love Him."

A truce, then, my Brethren, to all murmurs of complaint. Remember St. Paul's words to the Hebrews, and through them to all of Christ's flock, when, referring to the bloody sacrifice of

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Our Lord upon the cross he reminded them that they had not yet resisted unto blood. Not only to the Redeemer's example shall you look but also to that of the thirty thousand, perhaps forty thousand, men who have already shed their life-blood for their country. In comparison with them what have you endured who are deprived of the daily comforts of your lives, your newspapers, your means of travel, communication with your families? Let the patriotism of our army, the heroism of our King, of our beloved Queen in her magnanimity, serve to stimulate us and support us. Let us bemoan ourselves no more. Let us deserve the coming deliverance. Let us hasten it by our virtue even more than by our prayers. Courage, Brethren. Suffering passes away; the crown of life for our souls, the crown of glory for our nation, shall not pass.

I do not require of you to renounce any of your national desires. On the contrary, I hold it as part of the obligations of my episcopal office to instruct you as to your duty in face of the Power that has invaded our soil and now occupies the greater part of our country. The authority of that Power is no lawful authority. Therefore in soul and conscience you owe it neither respect, nor attachment, nor obedience.

The sole lawful authority in Belgium is that of our King, of our Government, of the elected repre-

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sentatives of the nation. This authority alone has a right to our affection, our submission.

Thus, the invader's acts of public administration have in themselves no authority, but legitimate authority has tacitly ratified such of those acts as affect the general interest, and this ratification, and this only, gives them juridic value.

Occupied provinces are not conquered provinces. Belgium is no more a German province than Galicia is a Russian province. Nevertheless the occupied portion of our country is in a position it is compelled to endure. The greater part of our towns, having surrendered to the enemy on conditions, are bound to observe those conditions. From the outset of military operations the civil authorities of the country urged upon all private persons the necessity of abstention from hostile acts against the enemy's army. That instruction remains in force. It is our army, and our army solely, in league with the valiant troops of our Allies, that has the honour and the duty of national defence. Let us entrust the army with our final deliverance.

Towards the persons of those who are holding dominion among us by military force, and who assuredly cannot but be sensible of the chivalrous energy with which we have defended, and are still defending, our independence, let us conduct ourselves with all needful forbearance. Some among

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them have declared themselves willing to mitigate, as far as possible, the severity of our situation and to help us to recover some minimum of regular civic life. Let us observe the rules they have laid upon us so long as those rules do not violate our personal liberty, nor our consciences as Christians, nor our duty to our country. Let us not take bravado for courage, nor tumult for bravery.

You especially, my dearest Brethren in the Priesthood, be you at once the best examples of Patriotism and the best supporters of public order. On the field of battle you have been magnificent. The King and the Army admire the intrepidity of our military chaplains in face of death, their charity at the work of the ambulance. Your Bishops are proud of you.

You have suffered greatly. You have endured much calumny. But be patient; history will do you justice. I to-day bear my witness for you.

Wherever it has been possible I have questioned our people, our clergy, and particularly a considerable number of priests who had been deported to German prisons, but whom a principle of humanity, to which I gladly render homage, has since set at liberty. Well, I affirm upon my honour, and I am prepared to assert upon faith of my oath, that until now I have not met a single ecclesiastic, secular or regular, who had once incited civilians to bear arms against the enemy.

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All have loyally followed the instructions of their Bishops, given in the early days of August, to the effect that they were to use their moral influence over the civil population so that order might be preserved and military regulations observed.

I exhort you to persevere in this ministry of peace, which is for you the sanest form of Patriotism; to accept with all your hearts the privations you have to endure; to simplify still further, if it is possible, your way of life. One of you who is reduced by robbery and pillage to a state bordering on total destitution, said to me lately, "I am living now as I wish I had lived always."

Multiply the efforts of your charity, corporal and spiritual. Like the great Apostle, do you endure daily the cares of your Church, so that no man shall suffer loss and you not suffer loss, and no man fall and you not burn with zeal for him. Make yourselves the champions of all those virtues enjoined upon you by civic honour as well as by the Gospel of Christ. "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever modest, whatsoever just, whatsoever holy, whatsoever lovely, whatsoever of good fame, if there be any virtue, if any praise of discipline, think on these things." So may the worthiness of our lives justify us, my most dear Colleagues, in repeating the noble claim of St. Paul: "The things which ye have learned,

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and received, and heard, and seen, in me, these do ye, and the God of peace shall be with you."

Conclusion.

Let us continue then, dearest Brethren, to pray, to do penance, to attend Holy Mass, and to receive Holy Communion for the sacred intention of our dear country. . . . I recommend parish priests to hold a funeral service on behalf of our fallen soldiers, on every Saturday.

Money, I know well, is scarce with you all. Nevertheless, if you have little, give of that little, for the succour of those among your fellow countrymen who are without shelter, without fuel, without sufficient bread. I have directed my parish priests to form for this purpose, in every parish, a relief committee. Do you second them charitably and convey to my hands such alms as you can save from your superfluity, if not from your necessities, so that I may be the distributor to the destitute who are known to me.

Our distress has moved the other nations. England, Ireland, and Scotland; France, Holland, the United States, Canada, have vied with each other in generosity for our relief. It is a spectacle at once most mournful and most noble. Here again is a revelation of the Providential

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Wisdom which draws good from evil. In your name, my Brethren, and in my own, I offer to the governments and the nations that have succoured us the assurance of our admiration and our gratitude.

With a touching goodness our Holy Father Benedict the Fifteenth has been the first to incline his heart towards us. When, a few moments after his election, he deigned to take me in his arms, I was bold enough there to ask that the first Pontifical Benediction he spoke should be given to Belgium, already in deep distress through the war. He eagerly closed with my wish, which I knew would also be yours. To-day, with delicate kindness, His Holiness has decided to renounce the annual offering of Peter's Pence from Belgium. In a letter dated on the beautiful festival of the Immaculate Virgin, December the Eighth, he assures us of the part he bears in our sufferings, he prays for us, calls down upon our Belgium the protection of Heaven, and exhorts us to hail in the then approaching advent of the Prince of Peace the dawn of better days. Here is the text of this valued message :

"To our dear Son, Désiré Mercier, Cardinal Priest of the Holy Roman Church, of the title of St. Peter in Chains, Archbishop of Malines, at Malines.

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“Our Dear Son,

HEALTH AND APOSTOLIC BENEDICTION

“The fatherly solicitude which we feel for all the faithful whom Divine Providence has entrusted to our care, causes us to share their griefs even more fully than their joys.

“Could we then fail to be moved by keenest sorrow at the sight of the Belgian nation which we so dearly love, reduced by a most cruel and most disastrous war to this lamentable state?

“We behold the King and his august family, the members of the Government, the chief persons of the country, bishops, priests, and a whole people enduring woes which must fill with pity all gentle hearts, and which our own soul, in the fervour of paternal love, must be the first to compassionate. Thus, under the burden of this distress and this mourning, we call, in our prayers, for an end to such misfortunes. May the God of mercy hasten the day! Meanwhile we strive to mitigate, as far as in us lies, this excessive suffering. Therefore the step taken by our dear Son, Cardinal Hartmann, Archbishop of Cologne, at whose request it was arranged that French or Belgian priests detained in Germany should have the treatment of officers, gave us great satisfaction, and we have expressed our thanks to him for his action.

“As regards Belgium, we have been informed that the faithful of that nation, so sorely tried, did

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not neglect, in their piety, to turn towards us their thoughts, and that even under the blow of so many calamities they proposed to gather this year, as in all preceding years, the offerings to St. Peter, which supply the necessities of the Apostolic See. This truly incomparable proof of piety and of attachment filled us with admiration; we accept it with all the affection that is due from a grateful heart: but having regard to the painful position in which our dear children are placed, we cannot bring ourselves to favour the fulfilment of that project, noble though it is. If any alms are to be gathered, our wish is that the money should be entirely devoted to the Benefit of the Belgian people, who are as illustrious by reason of their nobility and their piety as they are to-day worthy of all sympathy.

"Amid the difficulties and anxieties of the present hour we would remind the sons who are so dear to us that the arm of God is not shortened, that He is ever able to save, that His ear is not deaf to prayer.

"Let the hope of Divine aid increase with the approach of the festival of Christmas and of the mysteries that celebrate the Birth of Our Lord, and recall that peace which God proclaimed to mankind by His angels.

"May the souls of the suffering and afflicted find comfort and consolation in the assurance of

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the paternal tenderness that prompts our prayers. Yes, may God take pity upon the Belgian people, and grant them the abundance of all good.

"As a pledge of these prayers and good wishes, we now grant to all, and in the first place to you, our dear Son, the Apostolic Benediction.

"Given in Rome, by St. Peter's, on the feast of the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady, in the year MCMXIV, the first of our Pontificate.

"BENEDICT XV, POPE."

One last word, my dearest Brethren. At the outset of these troubles I said to you that in the day of the liberation of our territory we should give to the Sacred Heart and to the Blessed Virgin a public testimony of our gratitude. Since that date I have been able to consult my colleagues in the Episcopate, and in agreement with them, I now ask you to make, as soon as possible, a fresh effort to hasten the construction of the national basilica, promised by Belgium in honour of the Sacred Heart. As soon as the sun of peace shall shine upon our country, we shall redress our ruins, we shall restore shelter to those who have none, we shall rebuild our churches, we shall reconstitute our libraries, and we shall hope to crown this work of reconciliation by raising, upon the heights of the capital of Belgium, free and Catholic, that national basilica of the Sacred Heart. Further-

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more, every year we shall make it our duty to celebrate solemnly, on the Friday following Corpus Christi, the festival of the Sacred Heart.

Lastly, in every region of the diocese the clergy will organise an annual pilgrimage of thanksgiving to one of the privileged sanctuaries of the Blessed Virgin, in order to pay especial honour to the Protectress of our national independence and universal Mediatrix of the Christian commonwealth.

The present letter shall be read on the following dates—on the first day of the year and on the Sundays following the day on which it shall severally reach you.

Accept, my dearest Brethren, my wishes and prayers for you, and for the happiness of your families, and receive, I pray you, my paternal benediction.

D. J. CARD. MERCIER,
Archbishop of Malines.

II.

Pius X and Benedict XV The Papacy

Lent, 1915.

DEARLY BELOVED BRETHREN,

One of the most solemn moments I have known in all my life was that when the Dean of the Sacred College, accompanied by the Heads of the Order of Priests and of the Order of Deacons, advanced towards the Cardinal Archbishop of Bologna, and, placing the book of the Gospels before him, asked: "Do you accept the election that has just been canonically made of you for the Sovereign Pontificate?" *Acceperasne electionem de te canonice factam in Summum Pontificem?*

A reverent silence prevailed in the Sixtine Chapel. On the third day of the Conclave, Thursday, the 3rd of September, towards eleven in the morning, the Cardinals had cast their votes

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in favour of one of their youngest colleagues. The declaration of the ballot revealed the fact that Giacomo della Chiesa had obtained two-thirds of the votes. According to the canonical rules, he was therefore elected by the Assembly.

Only one condition was needed for him to become Pope, the successor of Pius X, the legitimate heir of St. Peter's prerogatives, Vicar of Jesus Christ. The Church, at that moment represented by the College of Cardinals, breathlessly awaited the categorical assent which was to close the operations of the conclave and seal the work of Providence. "The responsibilities about to weigh so heavily upon my frail shoulders," said the elected man, "should rightfully make me tremble, but, strong in God's help, I accept them." *Onus Quidem humanis humeris formidandum, sed, divino auxilio fretus, accepto.*

At the same moment, the sovereign voice of Christ ratifies in Heaven the declaration of His Vicar upon earth. The Holy Spirit becomes his Comforter. The Church has a head and once more resumes her normal course and conquests. The canopies that remained over the heads of all the cardinals, during the two first days of the conclave, are now lowered. Only the one that covers the seat of the Archbishop of Bologna continues to protect the Pope, while we in the assembly seem to hear a far-off echo from the shores of Lake Tiberias :

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"Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me more than these?"

"Yea, Lord; Thou knowest that I love Thee."

"Feed My lambs."

And the echo repeats: "Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me?"

"Yea, Lord; Thou knowest that I love Thee."

"Feed My lambs."

For a third time the echo came to us louder than before: "Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me?"

And Simon, grieved at this thrice-repeated question of the Master, answers: "Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee."

And Jesus concludes: "Feed My sheep."

"And follow Me: *Pasce agnos meos; pasce oves meas . . . sequere me!*"

The Dean of the Sacred College, or, more exactly, the Sub-Vice-Dean who actually took his place, then asked the Pope to choose a name for himself and to justify his choice.

The new Pontiff could not but call to mind him, who after having cast lustre upon the episcopacy of Bologna by his scientific work and his wisdom in government, had cast lustre also upon the pontifical throne, under the name of Benedict XIV. And so he took the name of Benedict XV.

From that moment the moving figure of Pius X is once again overshadowed, as the dead Pope so

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much desired that it might always have remained. We have not forgotten the tears shed by Cardinal Sarto, when the tiara was thrust upon him. Humble by birth, simple in taste, poor in his life, the dead Pope was never really able to get used to the splendours of his palace or to the official pomp of his court. His natural inclination led him towards more intimate surroundings; he unbent in friendship and in touch with the intimacies of family life; he had a taste for self-effacement, simplicity, poverty, and a preference for the bitter but comforting savour of self-denial, of tears in solitude, of converse in secret—*clauso ostio*, “doors close shut”—with Him Who came to redeem the world through suffering, and never fails, sooner or later, to seal His chosen with His stamp divine. Those who had the good fortune to bring their hearts into touch with the heart of Pius X know that a settled melancholy mingled with the fatherly gentleness in the depths of his soul, and helped to make up the complexity of his character.

The sudden shock of the European war gave the death blow to his constitution, worn out already by ceaseless work and overflowing care for others. The thing that caused him the most distress, according to those who received his last confidences, was the thought that priests, the ministers of peace, were about to sacrifice human lives—the lives, perhaps, of their own brothers in the priesthood.

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As he was in life, so he revealed himself in his last moments; and it has certainly not been forgotten that, in the last expression of his wishes, the Pope-King wrote after this fashion: "I possessed nothing when I ascended the pontifical throne. I have nothing that belongs to me to leave to mine: but I beg my successor to remember of his charity my two sisters who followed me to Rome in my retreat. My brother will continue to live by his work, but I should like to be able to secure for my sisters an allowance of 250 francs a month."

What a lesson, my brothers, for those who delight in the display of their riches! What respect for the dignity of work! What candour in simplicity of life! What discretion in the use of almsgiving! What devotion to poverty!

The people of Rome were moved to their humblest ranks by such greatness as this, and I remember to have seen a paper I may call vulgar rather than popular, which said, in an enthusiastic biography of Pius X: "He revived amongst us the figure of Francis of Assisi. Pius X is a saint."

The funeral ceremonies ordered for him by the Cardinals, Clergy and people of Rome were magnificent. Three services in succession were sung in the Sistine Chapel under the direction of Perosi. I do not know that I have ever seen anything so impressive. The Church, represented by its Bishops, by the clergy, by the religious orders, by

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the people and the noble families, stood all round a catafalque. A Pope whom all hold to be a saint has just given up his spirit. He must surely be in heaven, and yet the Church prays for him and sings: "*Rex tremendæ Majestatis qui salvandos salvas gratis, salva me, fons pietatis. . . . Ingemisco tamquam reus, culpa rubet vultus meus; supplicanti parce Deus!*" O King whose majesty makes men tremble, from Thy mercy alone can salvation come, bestow Thy pity upon me and save me. . . . I know that I am sinful and for that I groan aloud. Shame covers my face. I beseech Thee, O my God, spare me."

All of us, my Brethren, without a single exception, must rely upon the mercy of God. Do not boast of your merits, after the manner of the Pharisee in the Gospel parable. Have faith in Our divine Saviour. He asks but to bend lovingly towards the souls of them that repent.

The kindness of heart shown in such a winning way by the Holy Father had nothing of the sickly sensibility of the weak in it. He is commonly reported to have been the author of a short prayer which the priests on certain days must recite for their bishop. Here is the prayer in question: "*Oremus et pro Antistite nostro N.* Let us pray also for our bishop."

"*Stet et pascat in fortitudine tua, Domine, in sublimitate nominis tui.* Let the shepherd stand

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erect, strong in Thy strength, O my God, on the heights whence he shows himself in Thy name unto mankind."

Such, if I mistake not, were the characteristics of the dead Pope: A marvellous mingling of paternal tenderness with a force of character, master of itself, that gave to his soul the security of perfect balance, and to his whole face that combination of gravity, serenity and condescension—almost of playfulness—which the world found so attractive in him.

With a certain surprise, and even anxiety at times, the astonished public gave its admiration to this virile Pontiff in his hand to hand fight with Modernism.

If at the time of the birth of Luther and Calvin, the Church had possessed a Pontiff of the temper of Pius X, would Protestantism have drawn a third of Christian Europe away from Rome?

Pius X was, above all, a man of foresight and decision. He did not allow himself to be seduced by the blandishments of reformers who were naïvely ambitious to infuse new blood into the veins of the church, and dreamt of modernising it at the caprice of the fancies and errors of the Protestantism and Rationalism of to-day. Faithful to Catholic tradition, he held on high the axiom that even in the fifth century, St. Vincent of Lerins (himself a disciple of a martyred bishop of

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the third century, Saint Cyprian), opposed to the partisans of a doctrinal progress which would have meant that the Christian consciousness would have been, not perfected, but remoulded altogether, so that the treasures of the past would have utterly disappeared—*Nihil innovetur nisi quod traditum est*. “No innovation—the tradition alone!”

His plans thus laid, the Pope set about their full realisation, generally and in detail, by encyclicals and decrees, on grounds of doctrine and on grounds of discipline, in scientific works, in the press, in literature, in the teaching of Seminaries and Universities, and even amongst the people who were dearest to him, with an energy and perseverance sometimes disconcerting to watch.

When men come to take a distant view of this action of his, complex yet single, wide and penetrating, they will unanimously admire our great Pope's force of character, and they will bless Providence for having saved Christendom from the immense peril, not of any single heresy, but of every heresy at once, all mingled haphazard in a dangerous and deceitful whole.

Certainly a powerful personality cannot reveal itself fully, without riding roughshod over humdrum habits, without endangering even estimable claims of only secondary importance. Any far-reaching course of action demands some violence at the start; for humanity, as a whole, is not roused without a

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shock from its drowsiness or from its dreams. On the way to the desired end some even legitimate preoccupations are apt to be offended and some souls bound to be disturbed and to suffer. These lesser human vexations are the reverse side in the triumph of any great cause. Assuredly if Providence willed, it could inspire all rulers with a perfect wisdom, and could require of the world an obedience involving no sacrifice. But it is pleased instead to leave all leaders, even Popes, their own temperaments and emotions, and even those weaknesses which we term the defects of their good qualities. It requires that submission should be ennobled by humility, patience and constancy ; and this spectacle of the moral order, viewed in its fulness, is none the less fine, for being less miraculous and more human. In history, as in nature, departures from the course of law are exceptional.

Shall the child be taken from his father and mother because, at times, their system of education may lack balance? Shall the soldier kick against discipline because he fails to foresee the aim it has in view far off?

Providence holds in its hands the thread of events, and the intimate mechanism of all human actions. It is Providence that continually weaves the web of history, according to that great thought formulated by the Liturgy, on the occasion of the

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celebration of the Advent of the Redeeming Word: "O Wisdom that issueth forth from the lips of the Most High, thou who, from one extremity to another, dost dominate the centuries, and does order all things according to their places, with force and sweetness mingled: come down and show us the ways of Thy Providence. *O Sapientia, quæ ex ore Altissimi prodiisti, attingens a fine usque ad finem, fortiter suaviterque disponens omnia: veni ad docendum nos viam prudentiæ.*"

We shall not deny that in some Catholic countries, notably in Italy and in France, anti-modernism had urged certain impetuous temperaments—more potent in words than in good works—into harsh polemical disputations, underhand and personal too. It seemed as though the profession of Catholic faith were no longer enough for such improvised heights of orthodoxy, and that in order more humbly to obey the Pope, we were required to defy the authority of the bishop. Pamphleteers and unauthorised journalists excommunicated all those who refused to pass willingly under the Caudine Forks of their "integralism." An uneasiness began to affect upright souls and honest consciences began to suffer in silence.

With an authoritative gesture His Holiness Benedict XV restored things to their proper position. The following few lines constitute a

death sentence for this meddling "integralism": "Catholic faith is of such a nature (says the Pope) that nothing can be either added or subtracted from it: either one possesses it in its entirety or one does not possess it at all. *Hæc est fides catholica, quam nisi quisque fideliter firmiterque crediderit, salvus esse non poterit.* There is no need of qualifications for the profession of Catholicism: it is enough for each man to say: *Christianus mihi nomen, catholicus cognomen.* Christian is my name, Catholic is my surname. The essential point is to justify in deed the sincerity of the title thus given."

From the very first months of his Pontificate, the Holy Father made a point of revealing his private thought and of tracing with a masterly hand the programme of his Apostolic ministry. "The charity of Jesus Christ," he deigns to inform us, "must regain its control over our souls: this is to be the objective and as it were the special task of Our Pontificate. Let it be also, We exhort you, the aim and object of your zeal."

It is for us, bishops, priests, and faithful people to be inspired by this noble ideal. Pope Benedict XV is for all of us, at the present moment, the Christ visible on earth. When it is said of the Pope that he is the Vicar of Jesus Christ, what is meant is that in the sphere of sense he replaces Our Lord Jesus Christ amongst us, that he is His mouth-piece, His mandatory, His immediate deputy in the

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government of the Church. He is not sent into the world, as were formerly the prophets of Israel or the authors of the sacred books, to bring it a new message or the fruit of a direct inspiration from the Holy Spirit, but he is the supreme Interpreter of the traditional or written doctrine of Christ and His first apostles, the chief Lawgiver of Christian society, the Shepherd of the sheep and of their shepherds.

Let us pause, my Brethren, before the magnificent spectacle of the unity of Christian society, and let us bow beneath the royal and fatherly hand of him who is visibly the chief author of that unity.

It is good, at a time like this of disturbance and sharp divisions, to rest one's thoughts for a moment on the heights, and to behold, above the nations that are engaged in destroying one another, and above the plots and plans that are debated and that fail and fall, the peaceable and progressive march of our mother the Church, calling to the centre of Catholicity the Cardinals of two worlds, and confiding to them the care of providing in silence for its perpetuity. It is good to take part in the ascension of Benedict XV to the throne of Pius X and to follow in thought the continuity, upon the seat of St. Peter, of Catholic tradition and the soaring movement of its fruitfulness renewed for the 260th time.

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The finest homage we can pay to God in the troubled times in which we live is our serenity.

Whatever may happen in the world outside, the divine Master would have us always cheerful and youthful.

At the end of exhausting days of toil, while miserable human creatures descend to the level of beasts at night in their infamous dens, the Church calls its ministers, the chosen amongst its virgins, to prayer in common, and places in their mouths this song of thanksgiving and joy: "Come my brethren; come my sisters, let us rejoice before the God who saveth us. Let us keep ever in His sight, let us bless Him, and let the psalms that we sing unto Him tell Him of our joy. *Venite, exultemus Domino, jubilemus Deo salutari nostro, præoccupemus faciem ejus in confessione et in psalmis jubilemus ei.*"

And in the morning before the altar, do not both priests and faithful say thrice together: "*Introibo ad altare Dei, ad Deum qui lætificat juventutem meam?* I will go in to the altar of God: to God who giveth joy to my youth."

The world grows old, but the Church ever renews her youth.

Try, now, to understand this contrast, my Brethren.

Are political parties worth even the trouble of counting them? Have you ever known one of them

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to last for the space of a century? And industrial, commercial or financial enterprises, economic institutions, philanthropic, artistic or literary associations—do not all of them succeed one another like grey clouds across the sky? A race of many generations is exceptional. After a few generations, the majority of families die out, peoples and races intermingle, kingdoms and empires collapse : no human institution resists the shock of revolutions or the wear and tear of time.

Apart from a few principles that belong to the very roots of nature, how long do the products of human thought endure, or doctrines of art, or scientific theories, or philosophical systems?

And are religions any more tenacious of life?

No need to speak of the pagan religions, either of yesterday or to-day, seeing that they themselves made and still make necessary the regeneration of the world by Christianity.

Now, in the Christian era, there is in truth only the religion of Mahomet, the Eastern Schism, and Protestantism, that have any real importance. Mahommedanism is only maintained by force. The Greek Schism is cursed with immobility and sterility. Only the various national groups derived from the reformation have succeeded in finding, up to now, a temporary bond of union in their acceptance of the Bible as the source and divinely authorised rule of their faith.

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But now, under the influence of the rationalism and individualism of Kant, which so profoundly penetrated the protestant theological Faculties of France, Switzerland and Germany, the Bible has lost its divine and inspired character in the majority of intellectual centres.

And so, fatally, the old associations fall asunder, and they have only their common opposition to the primacy of Rome to give them an illusion of unity.

The whole of history, then, bears witness to this fact : that the sole centre of union and fruitful life is the Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Church.

And the Church inwardly owes this living and fruitful unity to the Redeeming Blood which flows within its veins, to the grace of the Holy Spirit which keeps our souls united by faith, hope and charity to Christ, and, through Christ, to God Himself. Outwardly, the Church owes her unity to her hierarchical constitution ; that is, to the episcopate, presided over by a universal monarch, who by his teachings, directions and government brings about the agreement of all his subjects, and, thanks to the substantial identity of his plans of action with those of the Popes that precede and follow him, keeps the generations at one through time as through space. The Church has not the artificial unity of a motionless monument whose weight rests upon immovable foundations, like the Pyramids of Egypt, or those gigantic rectangular blocks

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that make up the Porta Nigra of Treves, or the massive walls of the palace of the Cæsars.

No; the Church lives, and, like all other organisms, she renews herself while she remains ever the same.

She has her organisation. She has her head, to whom his episcopate is indissolubly joined. She has her tissues and organs which are constituted by all of you, believers, clergy and flock, charged with the various and variously important functions for which the Holy Spirit prepares and adapts you.

She has her own activity of life. She assimilates the outer world, grows, and develops, in accordance with the general laws that control the maintenance and progress of existence in organised beings.

You, his mother, admire now, in all the vigour of his full-grown youth, that same being whom you placed for the first time, tiny and frail, within his cradle, twenty years ago. But does not your maternal instinct know full well that he is none the less the fruit of your body?

In the retreat of the Coenaculum, immediately after the Ascension, Peter and the college of Apostles had with them the first disciples; the Saviour's mother; and his nephews—in the style of the period, the "brothers" of the Lord: in all, about a hundred and twenty persons. And yet from this same nascent Church the Gospel will be spread over Judæa, Samaria, and to the very ends

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of the earth; it is this Church that now in full maturity, in every portion of the globe, counts more than two hundred and fifty millions of adherents, nearly two thousand archbishops and bishops, with a numberless phalanx of priests, monks, and missionaries, devoted to prayer, penitence, charity, teaching, and apostolic labour.

The substance of the Apostles' Creed has spread out into those luxuriant growths represented in our eyes by the collections of the various Councils or by the *Summa Theologica* of Saint Thomas Aquinas.

That chamber of the *Cænaculum* is transformed into majestic cathedrals; those gatherings, held in a place apart, for the breaking of bread, have given place to the splendid solemnities of our liturgy, to the triumphant processions of Corpus Christi, to the Eucharistic Congresses of London, Cologne, Montreal, Madrid, Vienna, Malta, and Lourdes.

Thus the divine organism has grown and developed. In the course of centuries, it has assimilated philosophy, arts and sciences; slaves and free men; race and peoples; the uncivilised and the thinkers of the world; the family and the city; there is nothing that the Church does not thoroughly penetrate and make alive.

Now just because the Church has this marvellous power of universal absorption, it is essential that an authoritative instinct should preside over the accom-

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plishment of her assimilative functions, and should guide her in distinguishing healthy from harmful substances, so that she may develop by gaining her nourishment from the first, and should preserve herself from corruption by rejecting the second.

In other words, my Brethren, the indefectible vitality of the Church demands the doctrine of papal infallibility.¹

Christian society thinks, acts, seeks and discusses ; its disciples, its doctors and its missionaries bring to it, one after another, their contribution of thoughts, works and recruits. If it were uncritically to assimilate all these external products, it would soon be condemned to decay, and would share the fate of those innumerable heresies whose remains we see strewn upon the soil of the past. That must not be. Students and saints and bishops must submit the substances absorbed by the Church to a preliminary elaboration ; then, whether his supernatural instinct finds all the qualities of a healthy nourishment in them, or whether he eliminates from them (in advance again) a final residue of poisonous stuff, the universal Shepherd, Chief of Shepherds as of their flocks, defines, with supreme and inexhaustible authority, the rule for the support of the Church—the rule, that is, of the

¹ Cf. W. H. Mallock, *Doctrine and Doctrinal Disruption*, Chap. x, xi ; R. H. Benson, *A City Set on a Hill*, p. 16 et seq.

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truths of Faith and Morals, which in every period of history must nourish and contribute to the growth of Christian society.

Still more, the organism of the Church is at the summit of the ladder of life.

In proportion as the organic reign grows more perfect, the organs and functions belonging to living types are increasingly differentiated, and co-ordinated under more and more accentuated central control.

Thus, in the Church, in spite of its marvellous complexity, there is not a single organic element or vital function that does not depend immediately on the head—the sovereign and infallible Pope.

When ignorance and prejudice rise in rebellion against the dogma of the Primacy and the infallibility of the Sovereign Pontiff, they deny the very condition of progress—commonly named “the law of evolution” by naturalists and sociologists.

For the rest, the doctrine of papal infallibility is not of recent origin, nor does it date from the 18th July, 1870, when it was solemnly proclaimed by the Vatican Council. It belonged also to Peter and his immediate successors, as well as to Benedict XV. Only, it was in fact accepted during the early ages without the faithful being conscious of their implicit belief. Time, reflexion and opposition were needed for the content of Christian consciousness to be gradually brought to light, until the day

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when Pius IX, of holy and glorious memory, in unison with the Fathers of the Vatican Council cast the conviction of eighteen hundred centuries into the formula of a dogmatic definition.

The Seer of the Apocalypse beholds an angel arising from the East of our earth towards the Heavens. This angel carries the royal seal of the living God, which he imprints upon the brow of twelve thousand of the elect of each of the twelve tribes of Israel. Then there appears a vast multitude, which it is given no man to number. Men of all nations and races, peoples and tongues, are represented. They stand erect before the eternal throne and before the Lamb divine. White robes wrap them about. They hold palm branches in their hands, and from them all goes forth the same voice of great power: "The Saviour is our God Who is seated on the throne, and this is the Lamb." The angels take up the cry in turn: "Let us bless, praise, glorify, give thanks and honour and reverence and prayer unto our God for ever and ever. Amen."

Then the voice of an elder is heard: "These that are clothed in white robes, who are they? And whence came they?"

"Thou knowest," answers Saint John, "do thou tell me."

And the Elder says to him: "These are they who are come out of great tribulation, and have washed

their robes and have made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore, they are before the throne of God and they serve Him day and night in His temple. And He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell over them. They shall no more hunger nor thirst, neither shall the sun fall on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall rule them and shall lead them to the fountains of the waters of life, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

Dearly beloved Brethren, these, the blessed, now conquerors of death and sorrow, are our brothers on earth of old. If we but will it, their lot shall be ours to-morrow.

There are not two Churches, one on the earth, another in Heaven: there is but one, which passes through two phases—the first, an earthly, the second a heavenly phase. To pass from earth to Heaven, is to change place of habitation, to go from the less good to the better, but it is not to change one's nature, nor even, strictly speaking, one's condition. Christ our King desires but one attendant company which is organised here and which displays its splendours on high. What the elect see, we believe; what they possess, we hope for; those whom they love, God, Christ, and His mother, the Angels, and Saints, we also love; humbly no doubt, but with a love like theirs.

Therefore the Apostle St. Paul is never weary of

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telling us that we must from henceforward keep ourselves in commerce with Heaven. "Our conversation is in heaven. *Nostra autem conversatio in cælis est.*"¹

Christ did not leave us, when He ascended again to His Father. Not only does He continue, though invisible, the outpouring of His divine life upon our baptised souls; not only does He maintain His presence amongst us under the appearances of bread and wine in the Mystery of the Eucharist; but He is always socially present through His Vicar, the successor of Peter, in whom and by whom He continues the supreme direction of His divine government.

Our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XV, sees grouped about his throne to-day the two hundred and fifty millions of the faithful, who send him the homage of their faith, love, and filial obedience from all parts of the world, and in the universal confusion of philosophical opinions and of religions of merely human origin, under the shocks of events and in face of all the uncertainties of the future, retain the profound calm of inward peace, because they lean upon the living rock, Peter, to whom Christ the Son of God once said: "Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build My church. And the gates of hell shall not prevent its ascension unto heaven."

¹ Phil. iii. 20.

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I know well, my Brethren, how great were your reverence and affection for Pius X. Transfer them to Benedict XV. Do not let a day pass without praying for him.

The new Pontiff inspires our hearts with the highest hopes.

He is young, he is hardly sixty. He is a man of initiative, gifted with an untiring energy, trained for fifteen years in the school of Leo XIII, and Cardinal Rampolla, known and admired—at Genoa his native town and at Rome where he studied and fulfilled most of his career—for his high distinction, wisdom and piety; loved, too, by all his diocesans at Bologna, where he showed the wealth of his soul as bishop with as much prudence as enthusiasm. He promises to provide a fruitful and glorious Pontificate for the Church.

From the first moment he gives ear to the words addressed by the Lord to the prophet Jeremiah: "See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over kingdoms, to root up and to pull down . . . to build and to plant. *Ecce constitui te hodie super gentes et super regna, ut evellas et destruas . . . et ædifices et plantes.*"

And the Pope adds: "Whatsoever may be the evil to be averted or the good to be promoted, we shall give all our care to the task."

The Encyclical from which I take that courageous phrase is rich in such instruction and exhorta-

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tion as responds to the actual needs of our souls. After casting a sorrowful glance upon the fratricidal struggles that tear Europe asunder, the Holy Father goes yet deeper into the ills of our society and affirms that public affairs have so little stability because the maxims and rules of Christian prudence no longer preside over the government of States.

Thus we see that there is no more any mutual goodwill in human relationships. Authority is despised; the various classes of society are at war with one another; the masses are carried away by the longing for perishable goods, and so forget those higher goods that alone form the true motives of action in the conduct of mankind.

Return once again (continues the Holy Father) to the law of charity. Love one another. We are all brothers. *Omnes autem vos fratres estis*,¹ brothers of Our Lord Jesus Christ, our elder brother. *Up sit ipse primogenitus in multis fratribus*.²

You must faithfully obey legitimate authority, because to resist that, is to resist God. *Subditi estote . . . propter conscientiam*.³ *Qui resistit potestati, Dei ordinationi resistit*.⁴

Let those who occupy the higher ranks of society treat the humblest, not only with justice, but also with benevolence, kindness and patience: let the humble for their part view with pleasure the suc-

¹ Matt. xxiii. 8. ² Rom. viii. 20. ³ Rom. xii. 5. ⁴ Rom. xiii. 2.

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cess of those from whom they rightfully expect aid, just as in a family the youngest rely upon the protection and assistance of their elders.

And lastly, be sure to meditate upon the Sermon on the Mount. Be persuaded that what men call the good things of this our mortal life, are good only in appearance. Do not keep your eyes always upon the earth, which is but a place of exile, but lift them towards the sky, whither all of us are destined to go, according to the word of the Apostle Saint Paul. "*Non habemus hic manentem civitatem, sed futuram inquirimus.*"¹ We were not created to remain upon this earth. Let us therefore send our aspiration up towards our fatherland that is to be."

And it is towards us, next, and towards you, my dear colleagues in the priesthood, and towards the students in the seminaries—priests of to-morrow—that our Holy Father the Pope directs his paternal glance, as he ends his encyclical.

Let it be our part to make our life holy, so that it may ever be in closer harmony with the sublimity of our vocation. Let it be our part, too, to inspire in the soul of our people, in the Catholic associations, which the Pope exhorts us to found or to promote, the instruction which we derive from the common Father of the faithful—from Him in Whom, according to the vigorous expression of the Pope,

¹ Heb. xiii. 13.

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St. Leo the Great, lives the power and reigns supreme the authority of God. *Cujus (Dei) in sede sua vivit potestas et excellit auctoritas.*

To you especially, my beloved Colleagues, belongs the duty of working in close union with your bishop, and under his direction.

Certainly this urgent recommendation of the Pope is less needed in Belgium than elsewhere. And yet have not we known, here also, certain young priests animated by "the spirit of independence and insubordination who have saddened and opposed their Pastor, instead of securing for him the assistance and good comfort he was entitled to expect of them?"

"If any one have strayed from his duty on this matter," continues the Sovereign Pontiff, "let him seriously consider the divine character of the authority of bishops, who have been appointed by the Holy Spirit to the government of the Church. *Quos Spiritus sanctus posuit episcopos regere Ecclesiam Dei*;¹ and if to resist any legitimate authority be to resist God, as we have shown that it is, then it must be all the more an act of impiety to refuse obedience to the Bishops, whom God has consecrated and marked with the seal of His power. St. Ignatius the Martyr says: "*Cum caritas, non sinat me tacere de vobis propterea anteverti vos admonere, ut unanimes sitis in sententia Dei.*

¹ Eph. iii.

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Etenim Jesus Christus, inseparabilis nostra vita, sententia Patris ut episcopi, per tractus terræ constituti, in sententia Patris sunt. Unde decet vos in episcopi sententiam concurrere." "Now all the Fathers and Doctors of the Church have said exactly the same thing," continues the Sovereign Pontiff with fatherly tenderness. "Add to this that the burden that weighs upon the shoulders of the Bishops in these difficult times is very heavy as it is. The cares inspired in them by the flock confided to their charge become increasingly devouring. *Ipsi enim pervigilant quasi rationem pro animabus vestris reddituri.* Is there not cruelty, then, in aggravating this burden and these anxieties by insubordination? *Hoc enim non expedit vobis.* For the Church consists of the people in union with their Bishops, the flock cleaving to the Shepherd. *Ecclesia est plebs sacerdoti adunata, et pastori suo grex adhærens;* whence it follows that not to be in agreement with one's bishop is not to be in agreement with the Church."

Yes, indeed, my beloved Fellow-workers, be ye always at one with us, in mind and heart. And you, my beloved Brothers, keep yourselves close always, by means of your parish priest, to your bishop who himself, in turn, desires to live and die in union with the Pastor of Pastors, Our Holy Father the Pope, the Vicar of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

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So shall be realised in us the sublime wish of our divine Jesus in the moment of His death: *Ego in eis, et tu in me, ut sint consummati in unum*. "I in them and thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one."

The episcopate one with the Pope, the Pope one with the episcopate—that is the living principle of the unity of the Church; that is virtually the whole Church, in its unity and fruitfulness. Through the episcopate united to the Pope, the whole Church forms only one body with Christ who in His divine nature is one with God Himself.

In the unity of the Church—it is Bossuet who speaks thus—in the unity of the Church, the Trinity appears in unity: the Father, as the principle to which men are united; the Son as the middle term in which we are united; the Holy Ghost as the bond of union by which we are united; and so all forms an Amen uttered unto God.

Jesus Christ, says St. Ignatius Martyr, is the mind of the Father and is one with the Father, just as thought is one with him who conceives it. Now the Bishops, wherever they may be scattered in the flesh over the surface of the globe, live in the design of the divine Founder of the Church, and are one in Him and with Him. Would you then be but one with the Christ, would you indissolubly share His life with Him and be joined in the spirit to Him by the eternal Father,

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in the unity of the Most Holy Trinity? Then let your souls make but one soul with the soul of your bishops.

You sought to fathom the mystery of the communion of saints, my Brethren, which is an article of your creed.

Do not forget the prayer of Christ. It was uttered after the institution of the Holy Eucharist, on the eve of the Sacrifice of Calvary: "That I be in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one. *Ego in eis, et Tu in Me, ut sint consummati in unum.*"

Malines. The Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin, 1915.

† D. J. CARD. MERCIER,
Arch. of Malines.

III.

Devotion to Christ and to His Divine Mother

Malines,
April 25, 1915.

MY DEAR FELLOW WORKERS,

Several Deans have placed before us for consideration questions that interest the entire diocese. We have, therefore, judged it desirable to let you know the answer that they seem to require.

We have been asked if the customary processions ought to take place this year.

We think that it is desirable to suppress, this year, such public processions as used to be freely taken part in by the civil and religious authorities of most of the communes, with the object of commemorating the ancient tradition of the dedication of the church in each parish. These processions are, in fact, a sign of rejoicing, and it would not be proper for us to indulge in any

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manifestation of gladness while our hearts are heavily oppressed and our patriotism bound in chains.

As to the Corpus Christi procession, which is appointed for the celebration of the triumph of God in the Eucharist, this may be held with the usual solemnity, wherever circumstances permit, according to the judgement of the parish priest ; but everything of a secular character ought here to be forbidden—brass or wind instruments, the display of banners of a non-religious character, etc. Elsewhere it may be enough to have a procession round the church, or even one within it.

As we have already told you in a previous communication, the playing of the Belgian National Anthem is allowed on the organ on the occasion of the funeral service of soldiers and under other exceptional circumstances ; but all other secular tunes, except the national anthem, are forbidden in the house of God.

In the decoration of statues also, and in the ornamentation of altars, be careful to preserve the sobriety insisted upon by the Liturgy and justified by a restrained patriotism. Ostentation is always out of place. Patriotism is national. The religion of Christ and the ritual celebrated by His Church are Catholic and universal.

The forthcoming Confirmations will give you an opportunity of showing that in these times of

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sorrowful trial you are more than ever attached to the evangelical law of Christian simplicity. The repast given by you on that occasion must be very frugal. Guests must be entertained simply and in very limited numbers. Anything that should have an appearance of too great ceremony just now would offend feelings you must be very careful to respect.

We are now, dear Fellow Workers, very near the month of Mary and the month of the Sacred Heart.

These dates awaken in the soul of the Belgian nation two devotions that are amongst the most popular we have, and in this, as in everything, it is our duty to set an example to our people, and to forward their spiritual interests both by word and deed. What you are glad to ask God for your bishop, he too asks the Lord for you. "Grant him, Lord, to benefit, by word and by example, those over whom he is set." To this the Church encourages us by the prospect of an eternity of happiness in the company of our faithful flock—"that he may reach eternal life together with the flock committed to his charge."

The following instruction is dogmatic, and I am afraid I may not have succeeded in making it simple enough for the understanding of the greater number. If you have reason to believe that it will not be easily understood by your

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congregations, you are at liberty to extract the essential ideas and to comment upon them to your people in a more explicit and vivid manner.

Beware, however, of declaring offhand that the great truths of Catholic teaching are not for the crowd. For whom, pray, did St. John write his Gospel? For whom did St. Paul, St. James, St. Peter and St. John design their epistles?

Every baptized soul carries in itself an intelligence which demands satisfaction, and which Christian doctrine is meant to nourish. Have you not often been surprised to see how the little children of only seven or eight, whom you prepare for Communion, are accessible, when their hearts are pure, to the highest truths of Christianity?

If ignorance in religious matters is sometimes so distressing, is the fault always with the people themselves? "How shall they believe Him of whom they have not heard?" said St. Paul. "And how shall they hear without a preacher?"¹ Why should you suppose that the people should believe in Him of whom they have never even heard? And how should they hear of Him if He be not preached to them? But is it to preach Him, only to proclaim His law and to announce His promises or His threats, without also attracting all minds and hearts towards the adorable Mystery of His divine-human Person? Is it not in this Mystery,

¹ Rom. x., 14.

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which forms the substance of Christianity, that is condensed the very essence of our life as Christians ?

What is an ethic without dogma, a system of piety without doctrine, but a building hung in the air or based upon the sand ?

The Doctor of Theology whom Providence destined for the Sovereign Pontificate under the name of Leo the Great has uttered this thought which inspires the Catholic liturgy : " Public prayer may serve as a rule to Christian belief." ¹ The reverse also is true ; dogma and dogmatic theology must direct piety and enlighten, and; if need be, correct all popular devotion. The Council of Trent teaches that " faith is at the base and root of all sanctification." ² Now theology is only the authorised interpretation of faith, and dogma is only the solemn and obligatory expression of it.

Under the pretext, indeed, of putting it within the reach of all, men go so far as to empty the Christian creed of its substance ; and fail to understand that, through lack of nourishment for their belief, the faithful languish, half-starved, and often give way to indifference.

The very terminology of essential dogmas disappears.

Do not the mysteries of the most Holy Trinity,

¹ Migne P.L. 50, 585, B. ² Conc. Trid., Sess. VI., Cap. VIII.

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of the Incarnation, of the Holy Eucharist, etc., require that the faithful should grasp the notions of nature, person, substance, and transubstantiation? If you shrink from the task of explaining these notions, to what does your Christian teaching really amount?

Be good enough, then, dear Fellow Workers, to read or to explain to your faithful, during the months of May and June the enclosed instruction : *Devotion to Christ and to His Divine Mother.*

This instruction contains three parts, entitled respectively :—

1. *Our Lord Jesus Christ, Author of Grace.*
2. *Devotion to the Sacred Heart of our Lord Jesus Christ.*
3. *Devotion to Mary, Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our own Mother.*

MY VERY DEAR BRETHREN,

“The grace of God,” says the Apostle St. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans, is “life everlasting in Christ Jesus our Lord.” “*Gratia autem Dei, vita æterna in Christo Jesu Domino Nostro.*”¹

Not very long ago I asked you to put this question to yourselves in the privacy of your consciences : “Am I a Christian?” I ask you again to-day, with even more positive preoccupation of thought : “Are you Christians?”

¹ Rom. vi., 23.

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You fulfil your Easter obligation ; you attend Mass on Sunday ; you do not refuse to obey the law of fasting and abstinence. That is very well ; in so doing, you act as Christians ; but Christian acts do not make a Christian.

What makes a Christian ?

I. OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, AUTHOR OF GRACE.

The Christian is he who has been baptized, and who, faithful to his baptism, gives his obedience to the Church.

And why is baptism the origin of Christian life, and fidelity to baptism the unfolding of that life ?

Because through baptism is effected the believer's embodiment with Christ, and one is a Christian because one is linked with Christ, a member of the body of which He is head, participating in a life of which His divine nature is the source and His human nature the channel. So that one is a Christian because one cleaves to the divine-human Personality of Christ, as the bough of a tree, or the branch of a vine, for instance, clings to the tree itself or to the stalk of the vine. One continues to be a Christian so long as one remains attached to Christ as the branch to the trunk, and, through the trunk, to the root. On the other hand, one ceases to be a

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Christian from the moment when, by an act of apostasy that denies the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, one refuses to live in union with Him, to draw in his divine sap and to be nourished by it. Thus, the branch of a tree, torn by a blast of wind from the trunk, dries up, languishes, and dies.

The comparison to which I have just drawn your attention is not a creation of my own imagination ; it is, as you are well aware, the figure under which our divine Master expressed his community of life with us, and the community of our life with His, wherein is the whole mystery of Christianity : " I am the Vine," He says in the Gospel of St. John. " You are the branches : He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit. . . . If anyone abide not in Me, he shall be cast forth as a branch, and shall wither ; and they shall gather him up and cast him into the fire, and he burneth." ¹

My Brethren, I beg of you a great effort of attention, and, at the risk of seeming at first sight overbold, I venture to ask all of you to do your utmost to understand and remember the deeper meaning of a theological expression, which, when comprehended, will cause you to advance still further in the understanding of the work of Christ and His divine Mother.

¹ John xv., 5, 6.

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Every Christian ought to know and to bear in mind certain words—such words, for instance, as *nature, person, consecration, transubstantiation*, and others like them, because by them the teaching that is summed up in a Christian dogma is fixed securely in the memory.

The word to which I now refer has an equivalent in our language, namely, the union of the terms “divine and human” in the expression: divine-human; but it has an advantage over that expression in that it conveys in one word—*theandric*,¹ the idea of divinity and humanity united.

You will understand in a moment why I insist upon this fusion of two terms.

Who, in the strictest sense is the author of sanctifying grace—the grace that baptism confers upon us, that penance, if necessary restores in us, that the Holy Eucharist nourishes?

Is it God, the one nature Which subsists in the Trinity of the Divine Persons?

There is a grace which is the direct and exclusive work of the most Holy Trinity, and this is the union of the Person of the Word with the Sacred

¹The word “*theandric*,” which appears as early as in the works of Denys the Areopagite, is composed of two Greek words combined: *Theos* (which means *God*) and *aner* (which means *man*). The word *Theos* is found in the proper names *Theodore*, *Theophilus*; the word *aner* in *Alexander*, *Andromachos*.

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Humanity of Christ, the constitution of the divine-human Personality of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This is the gift above all gifts, made by God to the world, the gift of which the Messias said to the Samaritan woman : "*Si scires donum Dei !*" " If thou didst know the gift of God ! " ¹

But He who is Himself this precious gift, becomes in turn a Giver to us. " Jesus Christ is the channel of grace and truth." "*Gratia et veritas per Jesum Christum facta est.*" ²

From the moment when the world possesses a divine-human Person, there is no longer any grace that is not of divine-human origin, or, to speak with more precision and force, there is no longer any grace that is not the *theandric* work of our Christ Jesus.

Christ, theology tells us, is at once the exemplary cause, the meritorious cause, and the efficient cause of the supernatural order. He is the exemplary cause, or the personal type on which all sanctity must be modelled. He is the meritorious cause, or He who, by substituting Himself for us, expiated our sins and restored us to that supernatural order from which we had fallen. " By His death He destroyed our death," says the Preface of the Easter season, " and by His resurrection, He restored our life." "*Mortem*

¹ John iv., 10.

² John i., 17.

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nostram moriendo destruxit, et vitam resurgendo reparavit." He is finally the efficient cause of the supernatural order: for every effect of grace, whether we speak of men or of angels, the Old or the New Testament, the Church upon earth or the glorious Church in Heaven, every effect of grace and glory has the Man-God for its author. In brief, henceforward the communication of grace is no longer a work exclusively divine, but *theandric*.¹

"God so loved the world," says St. John, "as to give His only-begotten Son"—that is the *gift*; and then he adds, that whosoever believeth in Christ escapes from death and lives the life everlasting—that is the *giver* and His work, as well as the indication of the indispensable condition of our share in salvation, namely, faith in Jesus Christ. "*Sic enim Deus dilexit mundum, ut filium suum unigenitum daret, ut omnis, qui credit in eum, non pereat sed habeat vitam æternam.*"²

Eternal wisdom has indeed so disposed of things that extremes should be linked together by a chain held by both. Being *God*, Christ has the power to communicate divine life to us. Making Himself *man*, one of ourselves, one of our race and blood, He raises us up to the Godhead. *God-man*, He transports our nature into the most Holy Trinity. *Man-God*, He causes the three divine

¹ St. Thomas, Summ. Theol. 3a, qq. 8 and 19. ² John iii., 16.

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Persons to come down to us and to live in us. "The vine and its branches are of the same nature," says St. Augustine. "Since Christ declares that He is the stock of the vine of which we are the branches, He must needs establish, between Himself and ourselves, a community of nature. With that object He takes our nature upon Him ; He becomes man. On the other hand, this man is God. Christ is God, for, in becoming man, He does not cease to be God. He possesses all that is needed, therefore, to bring divine life to birth and to cause it to grow within us." ¹

When Christ had said to the Samaritan woman : "If thou didst know the gift of God," "*Si scires donum Dei*," did He not add at once, "You ought to ask to drink of Me, and I would give you living water, if you begged it of Me," "*Si scires donum Dei et quis est, qui dicit tibi ; da mihi bibere, tu forsitan petisses ab eo, et dedisset tibi aquam vivam.*" ²

When the Apostle St. Peter desires to explain to the astonished crowd whence he derives the power of working miracles, he appeals to Jesus of Nazareth whom the Jewish people put to death, and

¹ "*Unius quippe naturae sunt vitis et palmites. Propter quod, cum esset Deus cujus naturae non sumus, factus est homo, ut in illo esset vitis humana natura, cujus et nos homines palmites esse possemus. . . Deus dat intrinsecus incrementum. . . Utique Deus est Christus, quia Deus erat Verbum ; unde Ipse et Pater unum sunt : et, si Verbum caro factum est, quod non erat manet quod erat.*" Tract. 80 in Joannem.

² John iv., 10.

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whom he calls "author of life" (*auctorem vitae*).¹

Christian artists are accustomed to make the river of grace that makes the world fruitful flow from the foot of the cross. God placed that river at the hill summit of human life; thence it pours its streams down the two hill-sides of history.

And since human nature, composed of matter and spirit, epitomises the created universe, so the Word made man, our Christ, at once is the central point in history and summarises the whole of creation.

The Apostle St. Paul expressly tells us this in his admirable letter to the Ephesians. God has deigned to make known unto us, says he, the mystery of His will, and His good pleasure to give to events their final perfection, by gathering under the headship of Christ all creatures, earthly and heavenly. *Ut notum faceret nobis sacramentum voluntatis suae, secundum beneplacitum ejus, quod proposuit in eo, in dispensatione plenitudinis temporum, instaurare omnia in Christo, quæ in coelis, et quæ in terra sunt, in ipso.*²

Although Christ is not the first in order of time, He is nevertheless the very first in the divine thought. "He comes before all created things," says St. Paul, "and all things, visible and invisible, were made by Him and for Him, and consist in Him; He is Himself the head of the living organism of

¹ Acts iii., 15.

² Ephes. i., 9, 10.

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the Church.” “ *In ipso condita sunt universa . . . visibilia et invisibilia . . . omnia per ipsum et in ipso creata sunt ; et ipse est ante omnes, et omnia in ipso constant. Et ipse est caput Corporis Ecclesiae.*”¹ In brief says the Apostle again, “ Christ is all and in all.” “ *Omnia, et in omnibus Christus.*”²

Is it surprising, then, that the holy Apostle should declare that he desires only to know our Lord Jesus Christ, since he is well aware that to know Him is to know everything, and that to preach Him is to preach the holy Gospel in its entirety? *Non enim judicavi me scire aliquid inter vos, nisi Jesum Christum et hunc crucifixum.*³ “ Unto the Jews Christ is a stumbling-block, the Gentiles take Him for a madman, but for us Jews or Pagans who are called to the faith Christ is substantially the power and wisdom of God.” “ *Christum Judaeis quidem scandalum gentibus autem stultitiam, ipsis autem vocatis Judaeis atque Græcis, Christum Dei virtutem et Dei sapientiam.*”⁴

St. John the Evangelist, in that splendid prologue which we read every day at the end of Mass, outlines in these few terms the mystery of God and His works ; the divine Word subsists eternally in the bosom of the most Holy Trinity. God

¹ Coloss. i., 16-18.

² Coloss. iii., 11.

³ I Cor. ii., 2.

⁴ I Cor. i., 24, 25.

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creates life and light in accordance with the wisdom of His Word, and scatters them in the course of the ages through His works. But the world in general, and the chosen people in particular, have repulsed these advances that He has made. Thereupon, Providence raises up St. John, the precursor of the Messias. At last, the Messias Himself appears, who shows Himself in the flesh amongst us. The Word of God, second Person of the Holy Trinity, becomes man, and dwells amongst us, bringing us grace and truth, and from His fullness flow down upon us the supernatural gifts that we receive.

Our question, then, has become clearer : Who, we asked, is the author of the sanctifying grace that we receive in baptism, and that makes us children of God ? Is it God, considered in His Holy Trinity ?

No, the immediate and rightly named author of grace is not the divinity alone, but God made man, our Lord Jesus Christ.

The wisdom of the divine scheme required that Christ should, " by His Passion, be the salvation of the multitude of the children of God whom He must lead to glory." "*Decebat enim eum (Christum) qui multos filios in gloriam adduxerat, auctorem salutis eorum per passionem consummare.*"¹

¹ Heb. ii., 10.

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It is He, it is Christ, who fills our souls with grace and, at the same time, with the faith that leads us unto God ; with hope, which sustains our longings for Him ; with charity, which keeps us ever one with Him.

Hear this brief maxim of St. Thomas Aquinas :

“ The effusion of grace in our souls is exclusively the work of Christ, and this sanctifying power belongs to Christ, because there is a personal union between His human nature and divinity.”¹

And now, my dearly beloved Brethren, I think you will better understand why the disciples of Christ were called the anointed ones, “ Chrestians,” or “ Christians,” from the foundation of the first ecclesiastical society by St. Peter in Antioch.² They are indeed part of Christ by the very fact of their baptism ; they depend upon Him ; they are a member of the body of which He is the head.

¹ “ Interior (autem) influxus gratiae non est ab aliquo nisi a solo Christo cujus humanitas, si hoc quod est divinitate conjuncta habet virtutem justificandi. (*Sum. Theol.* 3, q. 8, Art. 6, c.) In the preceding article the Holy Doctor had said : In anima Christi recepta est gratia secundum maximam eminentiam : et ideo ex illa eminentia gratiae, quam accepit, competit sibi quod gratie illa ad alios derivatur : quod pertinet ad rationem capitis. Et ideo eadem est secundum essentiam gratia personalis, qua anima Christi est justificata, et gratia ejus, secundum quod est caput Ecclesiae, justificans alios : differt tamen secundum rationem.”—*Ibid.*, Art 5, c.

² Acts xi., 26.

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And the whole of that body, composed of head and members, is named the Church. So to be a Christian is to be a member of Christ ; or, what amounts to the same thing, it is to belong to His Church.

These fundamental truths are but too little known. Although they contain the substance of Christianity, yet many of the faithful, even amongst those who form the chosen few, are ignorant of them, or else think seldom of them. And yet they ought to be aware that they cannot possibly read a page of St. John or of St. Peter, or of St. James—that they cannot read ten lines of St. Paul—without being confronted with one or the other aspects of this unique mystery of the theandric Christ, which ought to be everything to us, as it is everything in the sight of Him who reposes all His complacency on Christ.

And yet, my Brethren, however attractive this sublime mystery may be, my chief design was not to fix your attention upon it to-day. In reminding you of it, I particularly desire to bring to your attention the principle that illuminates the two great devotional observances that nourish your piety during the months of May and June—I mean, our devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and to the Mother of Jesus, the Blessed Virgin Mary.

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2. DEVOTION TO THE SACRED HEART OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

When we give our worship to the Sacred Heart, or rather to the Love of which that heart is the symbol, we do not by any means honour an exclusively human love in our Lord, as though Christ could act as a purely human creature, independent of the divine Person of the Word ; nor do we turn directly to His divine Love, as we should be doing if we acclaimed the Holy Trinity, or one of the three divine Persons. No ! our worship of the Sacred Heart is addressed immediately to Christ, to the theandric love of Christ ; it blesses, praises and adores the Love that Christ, the Word made man, has revealed to us by His work of redemption, by His Passion and Death, and by the divine institution of the Church, which is but a living continuation of Himself throughout the ages, and into that eternity wherein every impulse of the supernatural warmth and light radiates from the divine-human fire of His Sacred Heart.

How beautiful, in truth, is that chaunt of praise which the Priest offers up to the throne of the Holy Trinity, when, at the altar, holding in his hands the Body and Blood of our Lord, under the symbols of consecrated Bread and Wine, he pronounces the holy doxology : “ By Him, that

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is by Jesus Christ, and with Him, that is, with Jesus Christ, and in Him, that is in union with Jesus Christ, we offer Thee, All-powerful Father, all honour and glory in the unity of the Holy Ghost, for ever and ever. Amen." "*Per Ipsum et cum Ipso et in Ipso, est tibi Deo Patri Omnipotenti, in unitate Spiritus Sancti omnis honor et gloria, per omnia saecula saeculorum. Amen.*"

Christ only sought here below the glorification of His Father, and His Father in turn delights to-day to make the radiance of divine glory resplendent in the risen humanity of His Son.

"I have glorified Thee upon earth," says Jesus on the eve of His death; "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do. And now, glorify Thou Me, O Father, with Thyself, with the glory which I had before the world was with Thee."¹

Then turning towards His disciples and towards us, the Divine Master tell us: "The Holy Spirit will come unto you, and He shall glorify Me, because what He will teach you He shall receive of Me. I am the heir of all the glories of My Father, therefore I said that He shall receive of Mine and shall shew it to you." "*Cum venerit Spiritus veritatis . . . ille me clarificabit. Quia*

¹ "Ego te clarificari super terram: opus consummavi, quod dedisti mihi ut faciam: et nunc clarifica me, tu Pater, apud teipsum, claritate quam habui prius, quam mundus esset apud te."—John xvii., 4, 5.

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*de meo accipiet, et annuntiabit vobis. Omnia quaecumque habet Pater, mea sunt. Propterea dixit : quia de meo accipiet et annuntiabit vobis."*¹

Do not let us fear to exalt Christ in excess ; to honour Him is to glorify God Himself.

Do you not feel, my Brethren, that the Church delights in celebrating her Christ in the *Gloria* of the Mass, when she so nobly proclaims "the great glory" of the most Holy Trinity, saying : "We give thanks unto Thee for Thy great glory" ?

Who indeed, O divine Jesus, can be the true glorification of the sublime perfection of the Father, but Thou whom the Apostle St. Paul calls the "brightness of his glory and the figure of His divine substance" ("*splendor gloriæ et figura substantiæ ejus*").² Thou art all things unto us, through God. Thou art God become ours ; God with us ; our Emmanuel.

Be all things unto us, also, in God's presence. Thou hast taken upon Thyself our infirmities and weaknesses. Thou hast placed the burden of our iniquities upon Thy shoulders. Thou becamest in place of us what the divinely-inspired Apostle dared to name a living curse : "Christ was made a curse for us."³ Soften, we implore, in these sorrowful hours, soften divine justice unto us. Suffer us to approach with Thee, the throne of

¹ John xvi., 13-15.

² Heb. i., 3.

³ Gal. iii., 13.

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divine pity.¹ Be unto us Mediator, High Priest, and our Sacrifice of Peace.

To whom should we go, divine Jesus, if we had Thee not? *Ad quem, Domine, ibimus?* Is it not Thou alone that hast the words of eternal life? *Verba vita aeternae habes.*²

Thou art, for all of us, the whole of Sanctity, and we will not recognise other sovereignty than Thine, other majesty than Thine, O Christ Jesus, one with the Holy Ghost in the glory of God the Father. *Quoniam tu solus sanctus, tu solus Dominus, tu solus altissimus, Jesu Christe, cum Sancto Spiritu in gloria Dei Patris.*

O my dear Brethren, how often do we lose our time in fruitless speculations, in laborious ways and windings, though we have to our hands so simple a means of going straight to God and living in daily union with Him!

One might well weep tears of blood to see so many lives wasting themselves in frivolity or foolish living, while the Heart of Christ burns to fill them full to overflowing.

And when the authorised messengers of the eternal Word, instead of giving Christ to men's souls, Christ "the resurrection and the life,"³ disgust them with God by giving them to eat and drink of the insipid dilutions of human thought or of a literature without logical consistency,

¹ Heb. iv., 16.

² John vi., 69.

³ John xi., 25.

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one can but ask, with the Apostle St. Paul, "Where are the faithful dispensers of the gospel?" "*Hic jam quaeritur inter dispensatores, ut fidelis quis inveniatur?*"¹

This is a time for serious meditations, a time when many suffering souls, under the pressure of events, are eager for the interior life. It is a fitting moment to exhort them to seek peace in God, God in Christ, and Christ Himself through Mary.

Devotion to the love of Jesus in His Sacred Heart, comes indeed to its fullness in devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

3. DEVOTION TO MARY, MOTHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST AND OUR OWN MOTHER.

No doubt God who, in His infinite Wisdom, had decided to place Christ at the centre of His work, could have given to His Word a human nature drawn directly out of nothingness, like that He gave the first father of our race at the beginning.

But no! God willed that Jesus should have a

¹ Cor. iv., 2.

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Mother and that the grace which makes us children of God and of which Jesus is the immediate author, should be also, in some measure, the work of Mary.

In what sense is Mary the Mother of the grace belonging to our baptism and to our divine sonship ?

In a twofold sense.

In a first sense, in that, by giving birth to Jesus, she becomes spiritually the mother of the brothers of Jesus, living members of the mystical body of which Christ is the head.

In a second sense, in that, the communication of grace to our souls by Christ being a theandric work, the divine nature of Christ indeed takes part as principal cause in such communication, but the human nature of Christ takes part also, as subordinate cause. Now the human nature of Christ is the fruit of Mary's motherhood ; in consequence, Mary has her part too, not only in the birth of our divine sonship, but also in all the increase of Christian life that the progress of grace accomplishes in our souls.

The development of this double thought will help us to understand why and in what manner Mary, being in the physical acceptation of the word the Mother of Jesus, is also spiritually and truly our Mother ; and on this doctrine of Mary's motherhood we shall base our cult of and devotion to the Blessed Virgin.

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In the first place, we say, Mary, being the Mother of Jesus, cannot but be also, spiritually, our Mother.

The Son of God made man, our Lord Jesus Christ, was at no time alone in the thought of the eternal Father. Always, He conceived of Him joined to the mystical body, which belonged to His divine-human person, as a corollary belongs to its proposition, as the stones of a building to its foundation, as the members of a living organism to the head that presides over it and directs its vital functions. The plan of eternal Wisdom, never contemplated Jesus, the very Son of God, without conceiving as joined to Him his brothers, adoptive sons whom grace brings forth to supernatural life. Now Mary is, in all truth, the associate of the Holy Trinity in the effective formation of the Man-God Jesus ; she is truly the Mother of the Son of God made man. So she becomes at the same moment the Mother of all those who, by the help of sanctifying grace are inseparably bound to the eternal Son of God. Mother of Jesus in the order of nature, she is therefore in the spiritual order, Mother also of the adopted children of God.

Mary acquired the prerogative of that spiritual maternity from the moment when she conceived her divine Son under the miraculous working of the Holy Ghost. From that moment she becomes

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the *root* of the divine-human stock of which we, children of grace, are the shoots ; the *door* which gives us access to the light of faith ; and from that moment she justifies the reverent words of our hymn : “ *Salve, radix ; salve, porta, ex qua mundo lux est orta* ” (“We hail Thee, root of the tree of life ;¹ we hail Thee, dawn of the day that must irradiate the world”).

Now, just as our divine Saviour only inaugurated the distribution of the graces which He merited on our behalf after His Passion and Death, when He ascended again to His Father in all the triumph of His resurrection, so one may say that the Blessed Virgin Mary only opened the treasures of her mother’s heart after the day on Calvary. From the height of His cross Christ, master at last of sin and death, proclaims her mother of John, and of the whole Christian Church in the person of John ; at that moment he instructs us in the desire of His divine Heart, that we should turn to His Mother as to our own mother. “ *Dicit Matri suae : Mulier, ecce filius tuus ; deinde dicit discipulo : ecce Mater tua !* ” “ Woman, behold thy Son, after that He saith to the disciple : Behold thy Mother.”²

The hour has struck for Mary’s maternal part to be played in the Church. Up to the historical moment when she arises, the world had known

¹ Anthem, “ Ave Regina Caelorum.”

² John xix., 26-29.

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only the guilty, exposed from their birth to the anger of the justice of God, "*natura filii irae.*"¹ With her, the rainbow of peace lights up the horizon. The aspect of things changes. The line of Adam and his rebellious sons shall be followed by the line of the children of God. Grace won by the sacrifice of Mary's Son will bring them to birth in Christian life, and hence in every stage of development of this life, Mary shall be associated with the dispensation of the merciful gifts of her Son Jesus.

This association of Mary with the effective communication of all the means of that grace dispensed of right by her divine Son, is the second explanatory reason of her supernatural Motherhood in relation to ourselves.

The work of our salvation is, we said, a *theandric* work, in which both the divine and human nature of Christ take part, the first as principal, the second as subordinate or instrumental cause. And since Christ's human nature is derived from Mary, the Mother of Jesus takes her place together with the three divine Persons, at the source of the beneficent river which pours down divine grace into our souls. For this reason, Mary is the Mother of divine grace, *Mater divinæ gratiæ*, and so already, in a remote and deep sense, our Mother as well. But she is, besides, our Mother in a

¹ Ephes. ii., 3.

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second closer and more present sense, inasmuch as by the Sacred Humanity of Jesus, Whose author she is, she has also her efficient part in the production of actual graces and of all increase of sanctifying grace within our souls.

No doubt the human nature of which Mary is physically the Mother plays only the part of an instrument in the theandric action of the Head of the Church, but its subordination does not make the causality of the instrument any the less effective, and in the same way, the spiritual function of Mary's maternity is none the less real in its relation to ourselves.

Next, to this physical relation of Jesus and His Mother is united the moral harmony of their wills, always in perfect unison with the divine Will.

In everything and at all times the will of Jesus is the faithful expression of the mind of His Heavenly Father, according to the very word of our divine Saviour. "I do only the things that please My Father." "*Ego quae placita sunt ei, facio semper.*"¹ And the will of Mary, "full of grace" ("*gratia plena*"), never dissociates itself in anything from that of the incarnate and redeeming Word, as was shown in the answer made by the Virgin of Nazareth to the angel who came from God to offer the privilege of divine Motherhood. "*Ecce ancilla Domini, fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum.*"

¹ John viii., 29.

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“ Behold the handmaid of the Lord ; be it done unto me according to Thy word.”

Mary takes part, then, in the effective communication of actual grace to our souls first because she is the author of the instrument whereby her divine Son confers them upon us ; and then because, admitted to the economy of our salvation, she associates her will, either by prayer or thanksgiving, with the use made of this instrument by her divine Son, in perfect conformity with the plan of Might, Wisdom and Love conceived by the most Holy Trinity.

If then, dearly beloved Brethren, you would grasp in all its fullness the splendour of the divine Motherhood of Mary, Mother of Jesus, and of her spiritual Motherhood of our souls in the Christian order, apply yourselves to consider it always in its relation both to God and to ourselves.

Considered in reference to God, the Mother of Jesus takes an unequalled place in the divine plan.

Mary provided indeed her virginal substance for the foundation of a human body which was destined to become, and did become, the human nature of a Man-God, under the miraculous operation of the Holy Spirit. Yes, indeed ; in all strictness of terms, Mary gives birth to a man who, personally, is God. She is *Dei Genitrix*, Mother of God. That is one of the first official definitions of Christian dogma. The third Œcumenical

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Council, held at Ephesus in the fifth century, defined this truth, henceforward an object of obligatory belief for the universal Church. "God is indeed Emmanuel, that is, God with us, and by consequence, the Holy Virgin is Mother of God. Since she gave her flesh to the bringing forth of the Word of God made man."¹

In the whole universe we know all created beings, except Jesus and Mary, as part of a finite order ; our thrice holy God subsists in Infinity ; Jesus, who binds the nature of God to the nature of man, in the unity of His Person, binds the finite to the Infinite, "reconciling highest and lowest in Himself." "*In se reconcilians ima summis.*"²

Now Mary, the Mother of Jesus, stands on the borderland of finite and infinite. As a woman, she is a human being, and, unlike her Son, Who is both created and uncreated, she is only a human being, essentially dependent and finite. But as Mother, the source of a human life which subsists in the personality of a God, she acquires a dignity that approaches to the Infinite.

"Divine Motherhood," St. Thomas expressly says, "bestows upon Mary a dignity that may

¹ Si quis non confitetur, Deum esse veraciter Emmanuel, et propterea Dei genitricem sanctam Virginem : peperit enim secundum carnem, carnem factum Dei Verbum, anathema sit.—*Conc. Ephesinum*, Canon I.

² Missa, *Salve, sancta Perens*, allelvis versicle.

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be called infinite. God of whom Mary is the Mother is, in fact, the Infinite. Divine Motherhood, therefore, constitutes a reality than which there is no higher possible, because there cannot be anything higher than God." ¹

And so Mary is the first of human beings and the only one whom divine Wisdom has preserved from the original stain. Can it indeed be conceived that Christ, who is substantial sanctity, should have been formed of flesh that had been stained, though for an instant ; or could have come into contact with a soul that had been found, though but for the space of a lightning-flash in a stormy sky, in rebellion against the Majesty of the Most-High ? ²

Pure from her conception, ever faithful to the grace with which her holy soul abounds, Mary, at the day of judgement, shall be raised on high in merit and glory above all created beings, angelic or human : she is the Queen of all saints. Her elevation to this high place, in the society of the elect, immediately below her Son, gives her the right to an exceptional devotion, which theologians have termed the devotion of *hyperdulia*. The

¹ "Beata Virgo, ex hoc quod est mater Dei, habet quamdam dignitatem infinitam ex bono infinito quod est Deus: et ex hac parte non potest aliquid fieri melius (ea) sicut non potest aliquid melius esse Deo."—1a, q. 26, Art. 6, 4.

² See in this connection the noble Encyclical of Pius X: *Ad diem illum lactissimum*.

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word *dulia* is a Greek word, meaning *service*. We owe to all the saints the *service* of our devotion, but to the Mother of Jesus we owe a special devotion and piety, a *devotion of hyperdulia*.

Mary's high place in the heavenly hierarchy certainly allows her an intercessory power unlike any other—a power well called “an omnipotence in prayer” (“*omnipotentia supplex*”); but Mary's spiritual mediation has its roots in her Motherhood.

The foundations of Christian piety were divinely laid in Jesus Christ. Every edifice of the life spiritual must be built upon Him. “For other foundation no man can lay but that which is laid, which is Christ Jesus.”¹ Mother of the Sacred Humanity of Jesus, Mary is, in one aspect, the Mother of God. That is her greatness. Under another aspect, she is the Mother of the adopted children of God who form the mystical body of her Son. In that consists the ultimate foundation of her spiritual maternity, and so of the omnipotence of the protective mediation she exercises in the Church.

She fulfils her maternal function, in the sense that all the economy of our salvation, from our spiritual birth in the waters of baptism to the complete unfolding of our souls in glory, being the theandric work of the Incarnate and Crucified Word, the human-divine communication of the

¹ 1 Cor. iii., 11.

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graces which permit us to grow to the full stature of man, wished and realised in us by Christ—"unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the age of the fullness of Christ"¹—is really dependent upon Mary. The Mother of Christ, Man-God, is therefore in all truth, the Mother of all our spiritual life.

And the mediation of our Mother knows no limits to its working.

Once before in one of his Encyclicals, Pope Leo XIII. put the matter admirably: "Of all the splendid treasures of grace brought to us by our Lord Jesus Christ, not one fragment can be allotted to us, in the divine plan, without the mediation of Mary. In consequence," the Holy Father concluded, "you must come to Christ through Mary your Mother, almost as, through the Son of God, you reach the Sovereign Majesty of His Father."²

CONCLUSION.

Strictly speaking, it is conceivable that there should be a Christianity without Angels and Martyrs, and a piety not directed towards any

¹ Ephes. iv., 13.

² Ex quo non minus vere proprieque affirmare licet, nihil prorsus de permagno illo omnis gratiae thesauro, quem attulit Dominus. . . nobis, nisi per Mariam, Deo sic volente, impertiri: ut, quo modo ad Summum Patrem, nisi per Filium, nemo potest accedere, ita fere, nisi per Matrem, accedere nemo possit ad Christum."—*Encycl.* 22 Sep. 1891.

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cult of the Saints ; for, as a matter of fact, Christianity did exist for a little while before the Apostles, Confessors, Virgins and all our Saints figured upon our altars. But a form of Christianity without Mary's presence is inconceivable, since Christianity *is* Christ and His work ; and, in the supernatural economy that divine Wisdom was pleased to conceive and divine Love pleased to realise, the Anointed Son of God is the Son of Mary. It necessarily follows that the work of Christ has its beginning, as much in the divine maternity of Mary, as in the Word's eternal birth in the heart of the unsearchable depths of the Most Holy Trinity.

There might easily be a certain overboldness, perhaps, in any innovation, if only in the language whereby we are in the habit of expressing our devotion towards our divine Mother. And yet there is a word I should be glad to suggest to your piety, since it faithfully sums up, not only the ideas I have tried to put before you in this instruction, but, if I mistake not, the substance of Catholic doctrine concerning devotion to the Holy Virgin.

Mother of Jesus and our own Mother, Mary is also *the Mother of the Church*.

The Church consists at once of Jesus and of the family of the elect whose firstborn He is—
“ the firstborn amongst many brethren.” ¹

¹ Rom. viii., 29.

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The Church is not simply a corporation in which Jesus, on the one hand, and the adoptive children of God on the other, are placed side by side, in however intimate an association you may like to conceive. No, the Church is a single organism, possessed of a single life. Christ is the Head of this Church ; we, children of God, are its members. The life of the Head is the life of the members. And that same living organisation of the society of the elect makes us dependent upon Christ, in the same sense as the eye or arm, in a natural organism, depends upon the nervous centres and upon the vital nerve-force that starts from them for the support and guidance of all the organism's functions. We are "the anointed ones"—Christians.

Not only, then, is Mary the Mother of Christ and our own Mother, but she is our own Mother, just because she is the Mother of Christ.

And since Christ and His members form a single Body, which is the Church, the divine Motherhood of Christ is the Motherhood of the Church ; Mary, Mother of the Incarnate Word and our own Mother, is the *Mother of the Church*.

But the whole of humanity belongs to the Church, if not actually and in point of fact, at least potentially and in the intention of God.

Mary, Mother of the Church, is therefore the Mother of the human race. She is the second Eve.

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The Liturgy names her the Sovereign of the world :
“ *Mundi Domina.*”¹

In the course of some sermons for a retreat which I preached to the clergy, I ventured to ask our priests, by their hopes and prayers to hasten the day when divine Providence might be pleased to grant a dogmatic definition of the belief dear already to the piety of the faithful—I mean, the belief that Mary, Mother of the Church, is the universal Mediatrix of the human race.

Would it not please you to see a new brightness added to our Mother’s crown ? And if this were done, would not the worship that rises from the ranks of our clergy and religious orders, from the souls of our young men and dear little children, fall back in a cloud of blessings upon our beloved land ?

Mater Christi, ora pro nobis.

Mater Sanctae Ecclesiae, ora pro nobis.

Mediatrix humani generis, intercede pro nobis.

Mother of Christ, pray for us.

Mother of the Holy Church, pray for us.

Universal Mediatrix of the human race, intercede for us.²

It was from the height of the Cross that our divine Lord promulgated the spiritual maternity of

¹ Missa in festo Septem Dolorum B.M.V.

² We grant two hundred days of indulgence for each occasion that these invocations are pronounced.

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Mary. From her immaculate Heart, into which grief had plunged its sword ever since the prophecy of the holy old man Simeon, Mary sent up obedient consent to the law of divine Justice, while, together with her Son, she spoke the words "*Consummatum est*" to the eternal Father. "It is consummated, my mission is accomplished."¹

The certificate of our spiritual birth was dated and authentically signed, with blood and tears, on Calvary.

Let us not forget whence we came. Let us show devotion to our native land. The present time reminds Catholic Belgium of the law of sacrifice. Let us show no faint-heartedness, my Brethren. Let us gather closely, with heads uplifted and brave hearts, with all the saints, about our Lady of Sorrows, at the foot of the Cross. When the death knell sounds, the resurrection is at hand. Let us make haste to fulfil the demands of satisfaction which divine justice makes upon us. Soon we shall be glad enough to have suffered a little.

"O God, at whose Passion, according to Simeon's prophecy, the gentle soul of the glorious Mary, Virgin and Mother, was pierced with a sword of grief, grant in Thy merciful goodness that we, who reverence the memory of her transfixion and suffering, aided by the glorious merits

¹ John xix., 30.

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and prayers of all the saints who remain standing faithfully at the foot of the Cross, may gather the happy fruits of Thy Passion."

"Deus, in cujus passione, secundum Simeonis prophetiam dulcissimam animam gloriosae Virginis et Matris Mariae doloris gladius pertransivit: concede propitius, ut qui transfixionem ejus et passionem venerando recolimus, gloriosis meritis et precibus omnium sanctorum cruci fideliter astantium intercedentibus, passionis tuae effectum felicem consequamur."

Your own hearts will suggest to you such devout practices in honour of the Sacred Heart and of the Holy Virgin as may suffice for the sanctification of these months of May and June ; their details I leave to your personal preferences and the direction of your parochial clergy.

But there is a prayer that ought to be recited each morning in all our parishes after the principal Mass ; I mean, the fine prayer for Peace composed by our Holy Father the Pope. And as you are aware, my Brethren, peace is defined to be security in order, order itself being the expression of justice. As you pray for the restoration of peace, then, you, together with the Sovereign Pontiff, must beg for repression of the acts of violence that have troubled European order, and you may await in confidence the

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triumph of our cause at the hands of Divine Wisdom and Goodness.

An indulgence of three hundred days is attached to the daily recital of this prayer, and a plenary indulgence is granted all those who recite it twenty times at least in the course of the month of May.

To such pious intentions concerning the general and higher interests of our country as are already familiar to you, I would now add one dictated to us specially by a sense of gratitude.

My Brethren, war is a horrible thing. There is no longer a Belgian alive who is not well aware of that. But we must admit that it is also the occasion, if not the cause, of many magnificent acts.

You are never weary of admiring our King, our Government, our Army ; and they, in turn, spare no praise of your self-sacrifice, your self-control, and I might almost say your cheerfulness in suffering. But I want now to call your attention to another spectacle, equally impressive, which urges a duty of gratitude upon us, the extent of which we perhaps have not sufficiently measured.

Holland, England, Ireland and Scotland, France and Switzerland, have for many a long month sheltered more than half a million of Belgian refugees. They have surrounded them with thoughtful attentions so as to guard them from the sadness of exile.

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But out of the seven million Belgians who have not left their native land, or who have returned to it, about a million and a half are quite unable to provide for their livelihood and subsistence.

Now men have arisen amongst our countrymen, possessed of a genius for foresight and organisation, who, with an unselfishness to which we take pleasure in giving a public testimony here, have kept those Belgians who are in need—about a fifth of the nation—from destitution and famine. I should like to be able to quote the names of all whose initiative, benevolence and charitable effort give them a right to a place of honour in our national history.¹

At the very beginning of the war, when our lands were invaded by the foe, a local committee

¹ We feel impelled, meanwhile, to quote the names of the inspirers of this work of beneficence. They are MM. Ernest Solvay, Adolphe Max, Jean Jadot, Emile Francqui, Emmanuel Janssen.

The Spanish and United States Ministers in Brussels : H.E. The Marquis of Villalobar and H.E. Mr. Brand Whitlock ; the Spanish Ambassador and the United States Ambassador in London ; Don Alfonso Merry del Val and Mr. Walter Hines Page and also Baron Lambert and Baron Francqui, with whom M. Michel Levie, formerly Minister of Finance, conferred, were good enough to give the benefit of their exalted patronage and powerful collaboration to the initiative of our own fellow-countrymen. Mr. Herbert Hoover is the President and prime mover, in London, of "The Commission for Relief in Belgium." Gifts of money already amount to more than a hundred millions of francs, and they do not come from the exceptional *largesse* of a millionaire, but represent for the most part the daily sum of generosity due to the whole American nation.

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was formed in Brussels which took the name of the National Committee for Relief and Food Supplies. The expenses it had to meet represented about ten millions a month, and that at a time when impoverished Belgium was deprived of all communication from without, and when foreign nations were mainly anxious to pile up their reserves. Thanks, nevertheless, to the exalted protection of Spain and the powerful aid of the United States, the National Committee succeeded in importing and distributing the provisions and other material needed for our supplies.

When the sun shines, and the morning dew or showers from the sky refresh our meadows according to their need, the peasant is content to believe that the grass grows of itself. A threatened drought is needed to make him lift up his eyes and his heart to the kind Providence above him. So it too often happens in the order of created beings. When a people has its portion of food allotted to it almost automatically each day (so good is the organisation involved) it inclines to overlook the hand of the benefactor behind the benefit it carelessly enjoys. And yet such help was not strictly our due, my Brethren ; and so, the initiative of those who obtained it for us, and the American people whose generosity provides it for us, have a right to our national gratitude. Please set apart a day each week—Tuesday, for example—to the

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duty of fulfilling your obligations towards them in your prayers, in the offer of your mortifications, and of your daily labours and sorrows.

To those benefactors whose public part I have just indicated, you should add the clergy and Bishops of France, Holland, England, Ireland, Australia, Canada, the United States and Brazil, who, from the beginning of the war, have lavished their sympathy and generosity upon us. If, through the devoted care of your parochial clergy, we have been in any degree able to come to the assistance of the needy, the unemployed, and the orphans, and to attend to the most urgently needed repairs for our ruined churches, and we have good hope of being able to continue to provide for the needs of to-morrow, we owe it to our brothers in other lands.

Yes, indeed ; I repeat what I said a little while ago, and now you will say it with me : If war is horrible, it at least is the cause of splendid actions.

Yield, then, to your generous feelings, my Brethren, " and be thankful " (" *et grati estote* ").¹ St. Thomas Aquinas tells us that the disposition to see good in others is the sign of a good heart.

Do not mistake an unselfishness that is beyond you for egoism in disguise. Make a point of believing that others are better than you. Above

¹ Col. iii., 15.

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all, beware of calumnies. From the beginning of the war, certain cunning, evil and treacherous minds have persisted in encouraging the rumour that the late Pope Pius X. and our Holy Father Benedict XV., the present Pope, gave financial help or moral approval to our enemies, and, through weakness, did an injustice to the rights of the Belgian people. These are calumnies, my Brethren—nothing but infamous calumnies. The simple, loving and generous heart of Pius X. was incapable, I do not say of any cowardice, but of so much as the appearance of an accommodation with injustice, even though it were triumphant. The truth is that the noble old man succumbed to the grief that overcame him, when he saw the European nations rent by murderous war, and Providence left him no time to express in public the holy horrors these orgies of blood inspired in him.

As for our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XV., what could he do for the Belgians that he has not done ?

His very first pontifical blessing was for us ; he graciously charged me to bring it to you in his name. On two occasions ; first, together with several members of the Sacred College, then quite recently, he was good enough to make a generous gift to Belgium, and that in spite of the extreme poverty of his resources and the much lower

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yield of Peter's Pence. In his fatherly goodness he addressed to us two letters of consolation designed for you, not to mention a private letter, full of the most affectionate tenderness, with which he endeavoured to sustain our courage at a difficult moment, during the early days of January. Add to that his resolute and noble consistorial allocution of the 22nd of January ; his answers to the telegrams of the King of the Belgians and our Government ; that to Monsieur Van den Heuvel, the minister attached to the Holy See ; the support he lent us by the means of his Apostolic Nuncio in Brussels—and if, after so many such significant instances of his “ quite peculiar predilection ” Belgium is still not satisfied, I am afraid her filial piety tempts her to sin through excess of spiritual hunger.

We append here the last letter His Holiness graciously caused to be written, in his name, through the Cardinal Secretary of State, to “ his beloved people.” When, each Tuesday, you give up your day to thoughts of gratitude, you must write the name of the Father of your souls at the head of the list of your benefactors, and in future a proud contempt must be your answer to all those who may endeavour to draw your hearts and wills away from him.

Here then, dear Brethren, is this precious pontifical document :—

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From the Vatican, April 9th, 1915, to His Eminence Cardinal Desiré Joseph Mercier, Archbishop of Malines.

YOUR EMINENCE,

At the very beginning of His Pontificate, in his survey of the whole world, His Holiness the Pope Benedict XV. let his eyes rest first upon Europe convulsed by this terrible war, and fixed them upon Belgium, as he followed the sorrowful events that were taking place there.

Profoundly moved by the misfortunes of that noble and generous nation, which is all the dearer to his heart in proportion as she has been and still remains attached to the Church and the Holy See, and desiring to contribute to relieve the sufferings of your beloved people, the Holy Father eagerly desired to send her the mite of His charity and of His august poverty.

Never ceasing to lift up on high his ardent prayers to the God of all mercy for the cessation of the awful scourge of war, the Holy Father beseeches Him in special manner to lighten the sorrows of your beloved people. And now wishing to give her a new proof of His care and His love, His Holiness has made a point of joining to his prayers the offering of His fatherly charity. In spite of the actually embarrassed conditions

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of the Holy See, he directs me to send you the sum of twenty-five thousand francs, which I have great pleasure in enclosing herewith.

His Holiness is convinced that this example, given by the common Father of the faithful, will be generously followed by His many children, the Catholics of the whole world, and that the mite of their charity, together with their prayers, will thus contribute to soften the sufferings of their brothers in Belgium.

In this connection, the Sovereign Pontiff has been happy to learn that very many Belgian Relief Committees have been set up, and that their efforts have already produced consoling results. He hopes that they will continue to exercise a helpful activity, and that a liberal response will be made to their appeals.

As a token of heavenly favour and of his peculiar predilection, His Holiness grants a special Benediction, with all warmth of heart, for your Eminence, for the Episcopate, the clergy and the people of Belgium, and at the same time he gives his blessing to all who help them in their troubles.

I gladly take this opportunity of renewing the expression of my deep sympathy for Your Eminence, as well as of my reverence and complete devotion in our Lord.

(Signed) P. CARD. GASPARRI.

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Your pastors remain closely united with you, dear Brethren, in their feelings of piety towards the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the immaculate and sorrowful heart of His divine Mother ; in their gratitude towards the benefactors of our nation and particularly towards our Holy Father the Pope ; and in a confidence stronger than ever in the certain deliverance of our beloved country. During the months of May and June all priests must say during Mass, after the collect *pro tempore belli*, a second collect, *pro devotis amicis*.

Observances of fasting and abstinence are suspended till the end of the war.

We desire that the present Pastoral Letter should be not only communicated to the parishes, at least in the form indicated on p. 246, but also read and explained to the diocesan religious communities, to the pupils in colleges, and to the young people of the congregations and boys' clubs.

We beg you to receive, dear Fellow Workers and beloved Brethren, together with the assurance of our affectionate devotion towards you, our fatherly blessing.

(Signed) D. J. CARD. MERCIER,
Archbishop of Malines.

IV.

A Call to Prayer

21st September, 1915.

DEARLY BELOVED BRETHREN,

The first conflict between good and evil had the heavens for its scene of action.

Before creating the pleiad of the worlds revolving in space, the Lord God created spirits in such multitudes that, according to the plausible doctrine of St. Thomas Aquinas, they far exceed the entire number of material creatures, unimaginable as that number may be.

These angelic beings God ranged in separate orders, according to the functions appointed to them by Providence and according to the divine perfection which it was their mission more especially to reflect. The harmony of each of these orders, and their joy before the throne of the divine Majesty, won for them the name of the "angelic choirs." Saint Paul enumerates nine of them, grouped into three larger categories,

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called hierarchies, which again form a single, complete organisation, known sometimes as the choir of angels, and sometimes, for a reason which we will presently explain, the heavenly host itself.

Thus our earthly globe and other planets form a solar system with the sun, round which they gravitate. The stars of the firmament are so many sun groups in constellations, which, in their turn, are absorbed in the vast organisation of a sidereal world governed by the laws of universal gravitation.

The stars are irresistibly fixed within their orbit, but from creatures of intelligence, from angels and from men, the Lord and Master is pleased to require worship freely given.

Our virtues are, in part, our work, and it will be an added honour for us in heaven to enjoy a bliss that we shall have earned ourselves. In like manner, the holiness of all pure spirits is the fruit of the moral probation that they have had to undergo.

Theologians generally suppose that the object of their probation was the announcement of the great mystery of Christ and the order given to them to bow before a God-Man to worship Him. That, says the Apostle St. Paul, is the great religious mystery; "God manifested in the flesh . . . appeared unto angels, hath been

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preached unto the Gentiles, is believed in the world, is taken up in glory.”¹

And when, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, he shows us the eternal Father bringing His only Son into the world, he tells us that all the angels were ordered to worship Him. “*Et cum iterum introducit primogenitum in orbem terrae, dicit : Et adorent eum omnes angeli Dei.*” “And again, when he bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, he saith, and let all the angels of God adore him.”²

In the beginning, as at the Temple of Jerusalem and as at the great day of the last judgement, the Word of God made man is the symbol of contradiction ; for some, He is an occasion of fall ; for many others, a source of new life ; for all a standard of conflict, and, for His own Mother, a piercing sword. Thus does it please God to bring to light the secret depths of men's hearts. “*Ecce positus est hic in ruinam, et in resurrectionem multorum in Israel ; et in signum cui contradicetur ; et tuam ipsius animam pertransibit gladius, ut revelentur ex multis cordibus cogitationes.*” “Behold, this *child* is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel ; and for a sign which shall be

¹ “*Et manifeste magnum est pietatis sacramentum, quod manifestatum est in carne. . . apparuit angelis, praedicatum est gentibus, creditum est in mundo, assumptum est in gloria.*”—
1 Tim. iii., 16.

² Hebrews, i., 6.

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contradicted. And thy own soul a sword shall pierce, that out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed." ¹

The angels, then, discerned this divine Jesus, as it were, in the background of their thoughts. His humanity itself was, so to speak, reduced to naught. He was likened rather to a worm than a man ; The people poured reproaches upon Him and rejected Him as abject. They that passed by looked upon Him with scorn, sneered, blasphemously murmured and shook their heads, saying one to another : He hoped in the Lord, let Him deliver Him. . . . But the Lord remained deaf to the prayer of the suppliant. Many dogs encompassed Him, the council of the malignant besieged Him, they dug His hands and His feet, they numbered all His bones. . . . Nevertheless, it is this rejected of men whom a great Church, as large as the earth, as lasting as the ages, shall acclaim, at whose table rich and poor shall sit ² " whom God shall exalt above all, and to whom He shall give a name which is above all names, that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that our Lord Jesus Christ is the glory of God the Father." ³

There were spirits who refused the tribute of

¹ Luke ii., 34, 35.

² Psalm xxii., *passim*.

³ Philippians ii., 9-11.

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their adoration to our Christ Jesus. Their pride, no doubt, whispered to them that to prostrate a pure spirit before a God-Man, and so to hail a man upon the throne of God, as one above themselves, to bow before a woman whom a Church was to acclaim as Queen of the Angels, would have amounted to an abdication on their part. Their chief, Lucifer, raised the signal of revolt, while he who henceforward shall be called the Prince of the Heavenly Host, St. Michael, rallying the legions of the faithful around him, cries aloud to them : " God is the Master, He has no equal." *Quis ut Deus ?* Who is there like unto God ?

Truth triumphs, the right of God prevails, Satan and the evil spirits whom he won over to his cause are driven out of heaven, and through eternity, the Apocalypse tells us, this song of the victors is heard re-echoing : " Now is come salvation and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ ; because the accuser of our brethren is cast forth . . . and they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb." "*Et audiavi vocem magnam in coelo dicentem : Nunc facta est salus, et virtus, et regnum Dei nostri, et potestas Christi ejus : quia projectus est accusator fratrum nostrorum. . . . Et ipsi vicerunt eum propter sanguinem Agni.*" ¹

The drama of Lucifer and Saint Michael is ever

¹ Apocalypse vii., 10, 11.

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being renewed in the course of the ages, my Brethren. In our souls and in human society, in every period of history, the hosts of evil and the hosts of good are in conflict ; error and truth, injustice and right, crime and innocence, contest the final triumph, until the day when the two cities, the city of the love of God and the city of hatred of God, shall be definitively established by the final decree of the supreme Judge. " Come," He will say to those whom He will have placed upon His right hand, " ye blessed of My Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." "*Venite benedicti Patris mei, possidete paratum vobis regnum a constitutione mundi.*" " Go," He will say, on the contrary, to the others whom He will have placed upon His left, " depart from me, you cursed, go into everlasting fire which my justice lighted for the devil and for the wicked angels." "*Discedite a me maledicti in ignem aeternum qui paratus est diabolo et angelis ejus.*" ¹

In this capital conflict, the only one that has an absolutely decisive importance for us all, we have the angels of heaven to help us. Every soul has its guardian angel ; every parish, every diocese has its protecting angel. The capital of our country has the privilege of being specially placed under the patronage of the

¹ Matthew xxv., 34, 41.

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glorious avenger of right, St. Michael, and his protection sheds its light all over our dear country as a whole.

In the dark hours through which we are now living, we cannot remember this glorious patronage without the deepest reverence.

Already, for a good many years, in obedience to the desire of Pope Leo XIII., you have been accustomed to repeat this invocation together, after Mass: "And do thou, Prince of the heavenly host, thrust down to hell, Satan and all wicked spirits, who wander through the world for the ruin of souls." Frequent repetition of this prayer, which ought to be carefully and distinctly pronounced by all, may perhaps have made it, here and there, and for some a more or less vague verbal formula. Henceforth you will be careful to say it after the priest, slowly and distinctly, for the defence of the rights of our Belgian native land. That will be a first tribute of worship to the great Archangel.

Here is a second: On the 29th of this month of September the Church celebrates the Feast of St. Michael; two days later, the month of October begins, which Pope Leo XIII. appointed to be the month of the Holy Rosary. Now, this year, the first day of October coincides with the first Friday of the month, a day of great devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

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My Brethren, our trials are long drawn out. Do not, I entreat you, give way to weariness. Let us not cease to pray and to do good. The sower must wait for the harvest. It will come, at its appointed time, and will not fail us. "*Bonum facientes non deficiamus; tempore enim suo metamus non deficientes.*" "And in doing good, let us not fail: for in due time we shall reap, not failing." ¹

During this last year, there has been a wonderful new bloom of religious life in our beloved diocese. Communion, already much more numerous than before, thanks to the influence of Pope Pius X., have further increased in number. In many parishes, and (it is worthy of remark) especially in those which have suffered most, they have almost doubled. May this revival become universal, and may it endure! Do not let your courage flag: "*Ne fatigemini, animis vestris deficientes.*" "Be not wearied, fainting in your minds." ²

A year ago you were trembling—we were all trembling—for our independence. Upon his side the aggressor had might, numbers, plans skilfully worked out. Humanly speaking, we had everything to fear, and I remember how, on the 8th of September, 1914, from the summit of the sanctuary of our Lady of Defence, at Marseilles, where with

¹ Galatians vi., 9.

² Hebrews xii., 3.

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three French cardinals, we had just committed our sister countries to the maternal protection of the Most Holy Virgin Mary, we turned our eyes, not without melancholy, towards the plains in the north, and with the Psalmist, we said : They have their war material and their cavalry, but we, strong in our right, will call with faith upon the Lord our God. "*Hi in curribus, et hi in equis : nos autem in nomine Domini nostri invocabimus.*"

"Some trust in chariots, and some in horses ; but we will call upon the name of the Lord our God."¹ And, if I mistake not, my dearly beloved Brethren, that same day, the 8th of September, 1914, the Feast of the Nativity of the Holy Virgin, was the date of the first news of victory in the glorious but still mysterious battle of the Marne, the point that marked the end of the invasion, the point that marked the beginning of the retreat which we implore the Sacred Heart of Jesus, our Lady of the Rosary and of Mediation, and the Archangel St. Michael to hasten and to complete.

Therefore, my Brethren, in the interval between the 29th of September and Friday the 1st of October, or Sunday the 3rd of October, all the dear people of our diocese should once at least receive Holy Communion.

¹ Psalm xx., 7.

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That will be a glorious spectacle of Christian confidence and patriotic endurance.

The clergy must put aside one day—say Thursday—for a general communion of little children. I seem to hear our divine Saviour repeating to mothers of families and to shepherds of souls the appeal which is recorded in His holy gospel: “Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God.”¹

Give ear, too, Christian parents, I entreat you, to this other warning of our divine Master: “He that shall scandalise one of these little ones, it were better for him that a millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea.”² Therefore I entreat you, do not familiarise these angelic little children with immodesty. Have the same respect for your young girls and your young women that their guardian angels have who, although charged to keep guard over them, do none the less have their eyes fixed ever in contemplation of My Father who is in heaven.”¹

Fervent souls will not be satisfied with one single communion in our approaching triduum. The grandeur, the trials and the hopes of our country and of our Allies will alternately call

¹ Mark x., 14.

² Matthew xviii., 6.

³ Matthew xviii., 10.

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forth their acts of thanksgiving, their compassion and their Christian faith. They will bless the Sacred Heart ; they will invoke the sorrowful and immaculate Heart of Mary ; they will place those who are fighting for us under the shield and protection of St. Michael. By their example and by their zeal they will draw the waverers, the lukewarm and those who are retarding the hour of our deliverance, to the communion rail, and every evening during the month of the Rosary, to the benediction of the Most Holy Sacrament also.

May these few lines, my Brethren, help to reawaken in you the worship of the holy angels, and accustom you to practise a more sustained, more reverential, more assured conversation with them. Our guardian angel is charged by God to follow us and to watch over us in all our ways. " You do not see him, you do not touch Him," St. Bernard says ; " but are you then so entangled in matter that you will only believe the evidence of your eyes and hands ? Have faith in the Word of God and make trial of the protection of the holy Angels." " They are faithful," St. Bernard says again ; " they are prudent, they are powerful : what is there that can make us afraid ? Let us accept their guidance, let us attach ourselves to them, and so let us remain under the protection of the God of heaven.

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“ Whenever grave temptation shall assail you or hard trial threaten you, call upon Him who in all the happy or unhappy changes and chances of life is your guardian, your guide, your helper : call Him to you and say to the good God : Lord, leave us not to perish ; save us. *Domine salva nos perimus.*”¹

The present letter is to be read from the pulpit in the parish churches and public chapels of the diocese on Sunday the 26th of September at every Mass.

D. J. CARD. MERCIER,
Archbishop of Malines.

To-day we are happy to bring to the knowledge of the clergy the concluding portion of an Apostolic Decree of His Holiness Benedict XV., entitled *De sacro ter peragendo in die Solemnis Commemorationis Omnium Fidelium defunctorum.* (Of offering Mass thrice on the day appointed for the Solemn Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed.) The complete text of this decree will be sent to you, but meanwhile these are the terms of the privilege which His Holiness deigns to grant to you :—

“ *Liceat omnibus in Ecclesia universa Sacerdotibus, quo die agitur Solemnis Commemoratio omnium*

¹ St. Bernard, in the psalm *Qui habitat.*

A CALL TO PRAYER

fideliū defunctorū ter sacrum facre; ea demum lege, ut unam e tribus Missis cuicumque maluerint applicare et stipem precipere queant: teneantur vere, nulla stipe percepta, applicare alteram Missam in suffragium omnium fideliū defunctorū, tertiam ad mentem summi Pontificis."

(" It shall be lawful for all Priests in the Catholic Church on the day when Solemn Commemoration is made of all the faithful departed, to offer Mass thrice; but with this proviso, that they can apply one of the three Masses for whomsoever they will and accept an offering; but they shall be bound, without accepting any offering, to apply the second Mass by way of suffrage for all the faithful departed, and the third according to the intention of the Sovereign Pontiff.")

The National Committee of Relief and Food Supplies has promised us oil for the supply of the Sanctuary lamps and wheat flour for the altar breads. The clergy will be able to obtain the oil at their Deanery centre; we will inform them later through what source the altar breads will reach them.

You have all proved yourselves eager to show the beneficent emotion stirred in you by the liturgical services at which you have been present during your retreat. Ought not the month of the Holy Rosary to provide you with a happy

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opportunity of enabling your parishioners to share in that emotion? Will you not reintroduce Vespers into your parish, if the service have been abandoned there? I commend the idea to the most earnest consideration of you all.

D. J.

V.

All Saints' Day and All Souls

15th October, 1915.

DEARLY BELOVED BRETHREN,

I do not think that there exists, in any literature, so glorious a procession as that which the Catholic Liturgy brings before our eyes on the Day of All Saints and on the Day of the Dead.

Already, on the preceding day, the Church has made us familiar with this thought—that our dead, when they leave us in a state of grace, are gathered into the hand of God, sheltered from evil and sorrow ; and that, however foolishly we may imagine them to be no more, they are none the less living, and in peace.

On the day of the Feast of All Saints, as the priest goes up to the altar, and the sub-deacon sings the epistle, the faithful, transported with joy, have eyes only for the half-opened heavens, where Christ Jesus, conqueror of death and sin,

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displays the tokens of his triumph, before the heavenly city. The centuries before Christ have sent their legions thither. Each of the twelve tribes of Israel is represented by twelve thousand of the chosen. Then comes a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, kindreds, people, and tongues. They stand before the throne, where reigns the Lamb of God, who has washed away the sins of the world. Their robes are of a whiteness unstained, they wave palm branches in their hands ; and from East to West, from North to South, the heavens sound with the mighty voice of their Hosannahs : “ Thanks be to our God, the King of all, thanks unto the Lamb, through Whom we are saved ! ”

The angels take part in the rejoicing ; their choirs surround the royal throne ; the heralds of Nature and of the Gospel stand, each in his place ; and all this mighty assembly, bowing down in adoration, repeats “ Amen ! Benediction and glory and wisdom, and thanksgiving, honour and power, and strength to our God, for ever and ever.” ¹

It pleased Providence to entrust to the apostle whom the Saviour loved best the duty of giving the world a specially distinct revelation of the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the merciful designs of His Sacred Heart.

¹ Apoc. vii., 2-12.

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After the Evangelists St. Matthew, St. Mark and St. Luke had finished writing the history of the birth, the public ministry, the Passion and Death, the Resurrection and Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ ; after St. Paul, St. Peter, and St. Jude had revealed the many aspects of the mystery of the Kingdom of Heaven, it was necessary to unfold the ways of Love to the souls of all men of goodwill.

This was the apostolic duty more especially of him who had the privilege of resting his head at the last supper on the breast of the eternal High Priest. It was for him to gather, at the foot of the cross, side by side with the Queen of Martyrs, the last breath of the divine Crucified, the last drops of blood and water that were set flowing by the lance of Longinus from the Sacred Heart which loved mankind so well, and which, my Brethren, despite such love for us, is still and evermore so little loved by each of us in return.

It seems that St. John wrote his Gospel, his three letters, and his Apocalypse, in order to acquaint us, not so much with the Jesus of history, as with the divine Jesus, eternally consubstantial with the Father ; Jesus, the revealer of the profound mystery of the divine life ; the Jesus Who ascended, through His own power, to the regions of glory, where He shares the throne of the All Holy Trinity, realises the fulfilment of the prophesy,

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“Thou art a priest for ever according to the order of Melchisedech,” and offers an everlasting sacrifice to His Father on our behalf—the sacrifice of Calvary—and for us also and always, his living intercession, until the day when He shall come again to pronounce His judgement upon the world for the last time. This Jesus is He Who, in all His glory with His Father, continually sends his beloved spouse, the Church, that divine comforter, Whom He promised in His parting discourse.

In his Apocalypse, that is, in his “Revelation,” the last of the divinely-inspired books, St. John has at heart above all the task of strengthening the troubled souls of them that suffer.

The first pagan persecutions have already broken out in their fury; others are imminent. The aged apostle’s heart bleeds. The Church of his Lord Jesus Christ is struggling, suffering, mourning. There are martyrs who are triumphant, but there are also their weaker brethren who show signs of bending under the storm. And now, as far as his prophetic gaze extends, he sees, all down that long road of the centuries to be trodden by the Christian community, nothing but sore labour, and tears mingled with blood.

And Christ is no more with us. The apostles and their first disciples had at least the consolation of seeing Him, of hearing His voice, and sometimes

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of partaking food with Him. The most unbelieving of them, such as Thomas, could kiss the wounds in His feet and His hands, or put his finger in the open wound of His Sacred Heart. But as for us, we are alone, and our Jesus loves us only from very far away.

No, a thousand times no (answers the seer of the Apocalypse). No, you are not alone.

Christ prophesied unto you that "The servant is not greater than His master. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you";¹ and Christ keeps the promise He has made.

But in the hour of farewell, Christ also predicted that He would dwell with you until the consummation of the world. Here, again, He has kept His word. He promised to send you His Holy Spirit, Whom He has sent, and he who will yield his heart to the divine love, shall surely feel in himself that Christ is with him and lives in him evermore.

No longer, either, is the Christ the defenceless Lamb, who is led to the slaughter. He is no longer the Jesus Who suffered Himself to be reviled, mocked and crucified. He is now the victorious Lamb, the avenger of truth and right, the Monarch steadfastly assured of the final triumph awaiting Him. He is, says St. John, "the Prince of the Kings of the earth."² When

¹ John xv., 20.

² Apoc. i., 5.

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He shall will it, " He shall rule them with a rod of iron."¹ " Emperors and kings are but His servants. When they shall fight with the Lamb, the Lamb shall overcome them."² The day shall come when the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains shall tremble before Him like the last of the bondmen.³ " Fear not," said He to His Church, " I am the first and the last. And alive and was dead. And, behold, I am living for ever and ever, and have the keys of death and hell."⁴

The history of the Church is symbolised in the Apocalypse by a Book, whose pages are sealed in seven different places with seals, which He alone, the Sovereign Master of history, the New David, is worthy and able to break.⁵

The breaking of the seals gives rise to a long series of famines, plagues, wars and persecutions ; but above all these visions of suffering and mourning hovers the heavenly smile of Him Whom you have heard the tribes of Israel and the serried ranks of the blessed hail as their Saviour and their God.

How good it is, my Brethren, in our hours of distress and ruin, in the weary waiting for our deliverance at hand, to listen to the prophetic words I have already recalled to you—" And one of the ancients answered, and said to me : These

¹ Apoc. ii., 27. ² Apoc. xvii., 14. ³ Apoc. vi., 15-17.
⁴ Apoc. i., 17, 18. ⁵ Apoc. v., 5.

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that are clothed in white robes, who are they ? And whence came they ? And I said to Him, My Lord, thou knowest. And he said to me : These are they who are come out of great tribulation and have washed their robes and have made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore they are before the throne of God ; and they serve Him day and night in His temple. And He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell over them. They shall no more hunger, nor thirst, neither shall the sun fall on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall rule them, and shall lead them to the fountains of the waters of life, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.”¹

By the light of these predictions, the most torturing problem that can harass the conscience of the people is set at rest, doubts disappear, and blasphemies are brought to confusion.

From the moral point of view, the great problem is that of evil and suffering.

Why must we suffer as we do ? Why have the innocent to suffer ? And why, I add, why are *they* the victims chosen for such suffering by God ?

Every European nation is at this moment overshadowed by sorrow ; but does it not seem that Providence has singled out the most Christian

¹ Apoc. vii., 13-17.

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races from among them to take the largest part in the sacrifice ?

Poland, whose name alone conjures up in our minds the idea of martyrdom, Poland obstinately faithful to her faith and freedom, is ravaged, plundered, and immersed in blood. Her episcopate has addressed an appeal for help to the Catholic nations. We must make it our endeavour to reply to this appeal with our prayers and our offerings of charity, tried though we be ourselves.

Must I speak to you once more of our own troubles ?

The whole life of our nation is suspended ; our workshops, our factories and our universities are closed ; our King is absent from amongst us ; hundreds of young people and heads of families languish in foreign prisons or expose their lives day and night on the field of battle. Wives and mothers are in tears ; and in the words of our Holy Father Pope Benedict XV., the hour is charged with hatred and bloodshed.

Yes, indeed, my Brethren, the Christian nations suffer. They are the heroes of the devastating tragedy of 1914-15, a tragedy which proves once more that Providence has no mind to depart from its general law, which would have those it loves best occupy the position of greatest honour in the solemn procession of sorrow.

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Why, you will ask me, why this apparent stern determination that the innocent should suffer? "Wherefore, O my God," said Job, "Why hidest Thou Thy face, and thinkest me Thy enemy? Against a leaf that is carried away with the wind, Thou showest Thy power. Wilt Thou pursue a dry straw?"¹

O, my Brethren, we must speak to you without roundabout phrases. Say not, I pray you, "Why are the Christian nations suffering, seeing that they are Christian?" Say rather: "Our beloved Belgium is Christian, known to be Christian, from the depth of her heart and by her age-long traditions. Surely, then, she is worthy to claim a place of distinction on the mount of Calvary."

Would you forget that the Founder of the society to which we are proud to belong was Himself crucified? Do you not know that His Mother, whom the sweet Jesus loved, humanly and divinely, as never a son loved before or since, was told at the dawning of her motherhood that the Son Whom she would bring into the world would be the victim chosen by God to redeem the sins of Mankind—that she herself would have her heart pierced, and that before she became the Queen of Heaven, she would be the Queen of Martyrs?

¹ Job xiii., 24, 25.

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Do you not know the ground on which the foundations of our holy Catholic apostolic and Roman Church were laid was almost continuously watered for three centuries by the blood of legions of martyrs ?

The Leader of our army proclaimed it : “ Who-soever will come after Me, let him take up his cross.”¹

And have you not heard the Apostle St. Paul recall to you, again and again, the law of your origin ? In his Epistle to the Romans (viii., 15) he says : “ You have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry, Abba (Father). For the Spirit Himself giveth testimony to our spirit that we are the sons of God.” “ And if sons, heirs also,” continues the Apostle, “ heirs indeed of God, joint heirs with Christ ; yet so if we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified with Him. ‘ *Si tamen compatimur, ut et conglorificemur.*’ ”²

You are the disciples of Christ, says the brave apostle elsewhere, and you are desirous of showing yourselves worthy of His gospel. What does that mean ? That you have faith in Christ ? Yes, without a doubt. But also that you receive the privilege of suffering for Him. “ For unto you it is given for Christ, not only to believe in Him, but to suffer for Him.”³

¹ Mark viii., 34.

² Rom. viii., 15, 16.

³ Philip i., 29.

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In reality, we are only the children of God in that we are the brothers of our Lord Jesus Christ. In the strictest sense of the word, the Eternal Father has only one Son, His Word, and if He condescends to adopt us into the divine family, it is in order to give His only Son the honour and joy of having a host of brothers. So they shall be made on the model of their elder brother. According to the divine plan, St. Paul tells us further, those "whom He foreknew, he also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His Son ; that He might be the firstborn amongst many brethren." ¹

Now, our elder brother is the Word Incarnate. Not only was He born and suffered, but He was born in order to suffer, in order to be able to suffer.

The Incarnation and the Redemption form but a single mystery ; the first is only a step towards the second, as St. Thomas Aquinas teaches.

Would not your generous hearts, my Brethren, have been unwilling to allow that our divine Jesus should be alone in His suffering ? Would He not have cruelly humiliated you had He said unto you : " I have desired to empty the cup of grief, down to the very dregs, alone ; but do you drink of the goblet of pleasure to the full ? " Will you not rather receive your small portion of

¹ Rom. viii., 2.

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the Holy Cross, on bended knees, with a gratitude even greater than your reverence ?

The Passion of our divine Saviour is not a work come yet to its completion, says St. Paul (Colos. 1-24) : " I now rejoice," says he, " in my sufferings for you, and fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ, in my flesh, for His body, which is the Church."

And then, turning to us in the conclusion of his Epistle to the Hebrews, the noble apostle cries unto us all :

" And therefore we also having so great a cloud of witnesses over our head, laying aside every weight and sin which surrounds us, let us run by patience to the fight proposed to us : looking on Jesus, the author and finisher of faith, who, having joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and now sitteth on the right-hand of the throne of God." ¹

The horrors of the war have roused the indifference of many, and for that we give thanks unto the wisdom and pity of Him who knows so admirably how to bring good out of evil. But those horrors have another object in God's intention, and ought to produce in us another effect, which is to make us accept and love the law of suffering and pain.

The good things of this world exercise their

¹ Heb. xii., 1, 2.

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fascination upon you : beware of their attractions. Do not make riches the one or supreme ideal of your life.

You suffer privations ; your tears flow ; you are the victims of annoyances, vexations, calumnies, it may be, or persecutions. Do not rebel. Do not complain.

Just now you heard the Epistle of the Mass which proclaimed the final triumph. Now read, too, the Gospel for this same Day of All Saints. Our divine Saviour repeats his Beatitudes to you. This is the programme of the struggles that co before the victory.

Alas, I seem to hear from amongst your ranks a voice rising in protest : " Impossible," it says, " impossible that happiness should be found in the midst of privations and tears ! "

Impossible, my brethren ? But try, only try. Our Lord deceives nobody.

When He announces the conditions of happiness we are bound to believe that he who fulfils them cannot fail to be happy.

Let it be well understood that there is no question here of that superficial contentment which thoughtless heads and frivolous hearts find for a moment in mere pleasure. No, it is a question of the profound happiness of the soul of that perfect peace which presides over all fleeting feelings, of that secure possession of

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ourselves which is not affected either by surface agitation or by the tooth of time. In a word, it is a question now of that happiness called eternal rest by the Gospel and the Church.

All will not understand, I know. Some will say in their hearts what certain witnesses of the Word of Christ, lacking in faith, used to say : " This saying is hard, and who can hear it ? " ¹

Some then will certainly refuse to hear us. But you at least, fervent souls, whom our Lord Jesus Christ has already perhaps formed in the school of difficulty and misfortune ; you who more than others have suffered poverty, anxiety and loss in the past year ; you, religious souls, who have vowed faithfully to walk upon the blood-stained tracks of the road of the Cross ; you, above all, pastors and educators of our youths, priestly souls, whose mission it is to make known to the world not an insipid gospel adapted to the taste of human frivolity, but the true austere and fortifying gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who was " born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified ; dead and buried " —it is for you to form that chosen company, spoken of in the Book of Machabees, through which the salvation of Israel shall come.²

Certain philosophers, the Stoics, made a

¹ John vi., 61.

² 1 Mach. v., 62.

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pretence of asserting that "Grief is but a word"; and they imagined thus that they would escape from the grasp of grief. No, grief is no mere word. Grief tears, undermines, penetrates and sometimes kills. One must not deny it, but love it. "Do but grant me a man that knows how to love," says St. Augustine, "and he will understand me." "*Da amantem et sentit quod dico.*"

What sacrifices are not readily undertaken for the sake of a place to be won in the world, or for the love of travel, or for an ambition, or for a profane and even a guilty passion, or for a mother's devotion, or for love of one's native land?

You dread the surgeon's lancet, yet you submit to the operator, because you expect the restoration of your shaken health from his art. And yet the lancet that wounds you cannot at the same moment heal the fibres of your flesh.

But the divine surgeon of your bodies and souls pours the balm together with the grief, so that the souls that most ardently love our Lord come at last to love suffering in itself, as an infallible means of keeping alive within them the flame of love divine. And so we see that the marvellous saying of St. Augustine is verified: "Love and you shall suffer no more; or if you suffer still, even your suffering shall be loved by you." "*Ubi amatur, non laboratur, vel, si laboratur, ipse labor amatur.*"

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You have heard the consolation of this teaching concerning the purifying nature of suffering. It forms a natural transition between the Feast of All Saints and the Commemoration of the Dead, and it will help us to understand the state, at once sorrowful and peaceful, of the souls in purgatory.

The pious English Oratorian, Father Faber, in his winning book, "All for Jesus,"¹ gives us a delicate analysis of the two contrasting aspects of the theological doctrine of Purgatory.

The first of these aspects is painful, sorrowful ; for the souls in purgatory suffer. St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas suppose that those that suffer the least there—for there are degrees in the penalties inflicted—endure a keener agony than any torture conceivable here on earth.

The souls in purgatory have indeed left this life in a state of grace. They are designed by right for heavenly bliss. This they well know, and, with all the impetuosity of their ardent impulse, at once natural and Christian, they long to throw themselves into the arms of Him on Whom all their love is fixed for evermore. But like that bird held by a thread, spoken of somewhere by St. John of the Cross, they are in captivity. The thread is slender ; it is the thread of "inordinate dispositions" ; left in the soul by past, although

¹ Ch. ix., *cf.* ch. ii., sect. 5.

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absolved, sins ; it is the debt still owing on account of penalties due for sins forgiven, but expiated insufficiently. Yet the slender thread—slender by comparison with the mortal sin which for ever excludes the dead man from Paradise—holds captive for a while the soul in its expectation of God—an expectation all the more poignant, in that God is now better known and desired, and because the lack of bodily organs has cut short all the distractions or dissipations that man found on earth in the satisfaction of his senses.

This sorrowful expectation of God is the essential punishment of purgatory.

St. Thomas calls it by the same name as the punishment of the damned—the punishment of “loss” ; not that it is identical in the two cases, for the chastisement of the damned is accompanied by hate, while that of the souls in purgatory is relieved by love ; but the punishment of both has a common character for a time, it deprives the soul of the sight and possession of God.

With some such thought as this, councils and theologians occasionally contrast heaven and hell with one another, as though there were no intermediate state between the state of the blessed and that of the accursed. In such cases, under the elastic term of lower or infernal regions, they group together, at one and the same time, the

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eternal hell of the reprobate and the temporary imprisonment of purgatory. The torment of the privation of God produces a sorrowfully sensitive echo in the soul. Theology assures us that in this case the secondary punishment of "sense" is added to the principal punishment of "loss."

The fact that our physical sufferings result from a lesion or an alteration of our bodily organs sometimes suggests the idea that an incorporeal soul must be lacking in this fundamental power of sensibility.

Here we forget two things : first, that in the human organism the source of the vitality and sensibility of the various organs composing it is in the soul ; next, that it is not the lesion or alteration as such that causes suffering, but such lesion or alteration as reflected in consciousness. This is shown by the fact that in a fainting fit pain ceases ; absence of feeling and lack of consciousness go together. Now the soul, though freed from the flesh, still keeps none the less the root of the organic and sensitive powers which used to grow up from it, and which again will grow from it in our bodies at the resurrection. As to consciousness, the soul possesses it more keenly in its state of separation from the body than in its state of union with it. This consciousness, then, is now even more accessible to the feeling of pain than it was here below. Thus

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St. Thomas Aquinas is of opinion that the pains which spring from the faculty of sense are greater than those of which we have experience.

Fools that we are, to expose ourselves so lightly to these hard but necessary sentences of Justice, when all the time our divine Saviour is generous with His warnings and His help that we may yet be spared them ! A perfect act of contrition, or confession with an imperfect contrition, the Christian acceptance of the laws of labour and the toils of life, the fasts and abstinences imposed upon us by the Church, or voluntarily undertaken, the duties of almsgiving, prayer, the Holy Mass, and the Holy Communion—these are the means whereby we may expiate our sins by our merits, or merit by the expiation of our sins.

Murmur no more against divine Justice, I beseech you, since you yourselves have provoked it, but strike your breast and resolve to do penance without delay. And, in view of your death, which shall come upon you in the hour when least you look for it, ask your relations and friends, and the priest of your parish to perform a great act of charity.

Our divine Saviour, who condescended to pity all our weaknesses, instituted a sacrament with the object of supporting our moral strength in the last struggles of our life, and of effacing even

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the last traces of sin in our souls, ere they appear before the tribunal of God.

Extreme Unction, or, more exactly, the Holy Unction of the sick—*Sacra infirmorum Unctio*, as the Council of Trent and the Roman Ritual express it—will give you back health, if it be healthful to you, and will, if you leave this world, cause you to escape from the penalties of purgatory. Is it not deplorable that foolish prejudices, maintained, you may be sure, by the perfidy of Satan, have given credit to the idea that this blessed sacrament is the precursor of death?

It is given to the dying, but we are afraid of giving it to the sick!

You must, then, while you are still well enough, require of your priest, your doctor, and those near you, that they should procure you the Holy Unction of the Sick, not when you are irretrievably lost, but as soon as there is a serious probability that your life is in danger. Thus, in all peace of mind and in clear consciousness, you will receive what the Council of Trent calls “the most powerful of all aids”—“*firmissimum praesidium*”—for the great crossing, and so you will respond to the ardent longing of the Heart of God, Who desires you to ascend straight from the earth into His paradise.

Under its first aspect, then, purgatory is the place of anguish, of suffering.

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But, on the other hand, Father Faber goes on, in the interpretation of the consolatory revelations vouchsafed to St. Catherine of Genoa, there is nothing more beautiful, next to heaven, nothing more peaceful, nothing more closely submitted unto God than the kingdom of suffering souls. Dante, the great Italian poet, whose philosophical and theological learning are as great as his genius as a writer, sees the souls of purgatory carried across in a little boat which hardly skims the surface of the waters. An angel, like a heavenly bird, beats the air with its wings, and the boat obeys. The souls all sing in chorus the psalm of deliverance : "*In exitu Israel de Aegypto.*"¹ Their sole care is to become purer—"more beautiful," as the poet puts it—so as no longer to be unworthy to appear before the infinite holiness of God.

In the Canon of the Mass the priest has every day a special prayer for the souls of the departed. "Remember them," he says to our Lord, "they have preceded us into eternity with the sign of faith, and they rest in the slumber of peace—*in somno pacis.*"

They do not yet enjoy eternal rest in refreshment and light, but they are none the less safe in Christ, to Whom they have the joy of belonging. The Council of Trent speaks of them as "dead in

¹ Ps. 114. "When Israel went out of Egypt."

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Christ"—*defunctae in Christo*. They are confirmed in grace, sheltered from sin, and even (thanks to the special protection of God) sheltered from venial sin.

They no longer have the power of adding to the sum of their merit ; but they are none the less generous in putting into practice both theological and moral virtues, and also those gifts of the Holy Spirit with which they were enriched at the moment of their leaving the earth. And now their time of trial is spent in acts of hope, of courage, of patience, charity and religious obedience to the most holy will of God.

They suffer intensely ; they will suffer perhaps for years, even for centuries, but they love the Justice that purifies them ; they respect the infinite purity that holds them at a distance, and there comes from purgatory no blasphemy or murmur of impatience. These noble and lovable souls " slumber truly in peace and rest in Christ," as they wait for their final bliss. " To all souls that rest in Christ," says the Liturgy of the Mass, " mercifully grant, Lord, the refreshing place of your Paradise, full of light and peace."

" O Christ, our God, Thou art the Resurrection and the Life and the Repose of Thy servant N. in his sleep," says a touching prayer of the Greco-Slav liturgy for the dead ; " we glorify Thee with Thy Father Who knows no beginning, and with

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Thy most holy beneficent and life-giving Spirit, now, always, and for ever and ever. Amen."

And yet, my Brethren, you must not deceive yourselves : suffering, though accepted and loved, is suffering none the less.

The desolation of souls in purgatory is all the more painful in that they are utterly unable to help themselves.

Fortunately, God has excellently ordered the matter. Though reduced to impotence as regards themselves, the souls of purgatory are able to pray for us. And we on our side have a thousand means of helping them.

In sin there is the guilt involved and there is also the penalty which is not always paid as soon as the sin is pardoned.

In every good and salutary action, accomplished by a soul in a state of grace, there is, apart from the strictly personal and inalienable merit, consisting in an increase of grace and constituting new and certain claim to an increase also of heavenly glory—there is also, I say, a "satisfying" value which expiates the penalties due for sins mortal or venial that have already been pardoned.

Divine generosity has willed that this satisfying value should be communicable to others. You have no faculty, therefore, of depriving yourselves of it, by act of intention, for the good of your

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brothers, and especially, if you wish it, for the good of the souls in purgatory.

The Church, which is in possession of the satisfying value of the human-divine works of our Lord, as well as of that of the works of the Blessed Virgin, the martyrs, and the saints, puts it partially at our disposition, under the form of indulgences, so that, by means of actions of penance and piety, we may transfer it to the suffering souls.

That being so, you must see, my Brethren, how very far your power of help and expiation can go in this direction. Good works, labour, sufferings loved or supported in Christian fashion, voluntary mortifications, almsgiving, public and private prayers, use of the sacraments—here are so many means within your power of bringing relief to those poor souls who, like the paralytic of the Gospel, see close by them the health-giving bath that would refresh them, but must await the charitable hand of help to plunge them into it.

The Church has approved an act that is called heroic. It consists in renouncing, for the sake of souls in purgatory, all our satisfactions, even the suffrages that others offer or will offer to God on our behalf now and after our death.

This act does indeed imply an abnegation so complete that it partakes of the nature of heroism. Do not consent to perform it without full reflection;

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but if grace prompts you to it, and if the director of your conscience approves your proceeding, perform it resolutely.

For, indeed, the more you forget yourself, the more will your personal merit grow, and so, thanks to the superabundant mercy of God, which surrounds us on all sides, you will lose only to gain more in the end.

For the rest, the souls in purgatory will give you back, now and after their liberation, all that you have sacrificed for them.

Some fervent souls, desirous of simplifying their spiritual life, have decided to abandon to the Blessed Virgin, "consoler of the afflicted," the care of distributing their suffrages to the Church suffering.

This act of filial renunciation is also a means of purifying and increasing your charity.

The Church sets the example. She will not permit the celebration of a single Mass unless the priest adds to his special intentions the intention of succouring all faithful Christians, living or dead.

Strive to enter into this generous spirit of the Liturgy.

The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, above all, is the means of shortening the length of their time in purgatory for the suffering souls. The Council of Trent has expressly declared it. "There is a

purgatory," says the Holy Council, "and it is in the power of the faithful to aid with their suffrages the souls that are detained there; but of all such suffrages the most powerful is the offering of the Sacrifice of the altar."

Certain theologians hold that purgatory is more densely populated than the earth. We do not know what may be the degree of probability in this conjecture, but what is very likely, is that death has mown down so many lives in the last year that the number of souls who sorrowfully await our generous pity must be very considerably increased.

For that reason one cannot sufficiently admire the great heart of the Sovereign Pontiff, our Holy Father the Pope Benedict XV., who has graciously granted all the priests of the Catholic world the privilege of celebrating three Masses for the departed on All Souls' Day.

Pope Pius X., too, in one of the last acts of his pontificate, allowed the faithful to gain on All Souls' Day a plenary indulgence—*toties quoties*—applicable only to the souls of purgatory. So that the faithful, so long as they confess and communicate, will gain a plenary indulgence, on the 2nd of November, as many times as they visit a church, or a public or a semi-public oratory to pray there for the departed, with the intentions of His Holiness.

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My Brethren, you will, I am sure, assist this generous impulse of our beloved Popes.

You will make it a duty several times to visit our churches on All Souls' Day. Also on that day I request that there may be, in all the parishes of the diocese, a solemn Mass for our brave men fallen on the field of battle. I should like this High Mass to be said at a very early hour so that the parishioners may associate themselves more intimately with the Holy Sacrifice by communicating at it with the priest. The celebrant will then better understand the lovely prayer of the Canon : " All powerful God, accept our sacrifice ; that all of us who at the table of the altar partake of the nourishment of the Sacred Body and Precious Blood of Thy Son, may receive in their fullness all the blessings of heaven with divine grace. Through the same Jesus Christ our Lord."

If it is only too true that the nations are warring one against the other, all the souls are nevertheless of one family. You must exclude none from your suffrages, not even the souls of the soldiers fallen as they brandished their weapons against us. Yet you must pray with especial predilection for the souls of your compatriots and their allies. You must be assiduous in your attendance at Holy Mass, for their intention, during the whole month of November. Further, I request that in every

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village and in each decanal church of the towns, there may be on one day of the month of November—Wednesday 17th November, for example—a most solemn Requiem for the repose of the souls of the soldiers who have sacrificed their lives for the defence of our independence. On the occasion of this service, a collection will be made for the benefit of our brothers in Poland.

The war tears the nation asunder. The patriotism of one race clashes against that of another. It is good to refresh our minds, after this cruel sight, by contemplation of the dogma of the communion of saints.

Heaven, purgatory and the earth form but a single Catholic family in which the souls have all one Father, our thrice Holy God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost ; one Mother in the heavens, the Blessed Virgin Mary ; one Mother only on earth during their exile, the Holy Roman Church ; one Mediator only, between God and men, Christ Jesus.

As between inhabitants of these three kingdoms, let us practice the exchange of our prayers, our good works, and our sufferings.

It is written, in the first Book of Machabees that Jonathan, anxious to maintain friendly relations with the Lacedemonians, caused them

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to be assured that always, at all solemn feasts, the Jewish people kept a memory of them, in sacrifices and religious observances ; “ for,” he added, “ it is meet and becoming to remember brethren.”

In the second Book of the same inspired work, it is recorded that Judas Machabeus, on the day after a battle that had demanded a great number of victims, ordered that there should be a collection, so that a sacrifice of expiation for the dead might be held at Jerusalem. “ Thinking well and religiously,” adds the Book, “ inspired by faith in the resurrection of the dead. (For if he had not hoped that they that were slain should rise again, it would have seemed superfluous and vain to pray for the dead.) He considered, moreover, that they who had fallen asleep with godliness had great grace laid up for them, and that it was a holy and wholesome thought. Whereupon he had celebrated for the dead a service of expiation, to the end that they might be delivered from their sins.” ¹

With a better claim even than the just of the Old Law, we sons of the New Alliance desire to protest, by the pious memory we hold of our absent brothers, by our almsgiving and our suffrages for the dead, that we believe in the communion

¹ 1 Mach. xii., 43-46.

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of saints, in the remission of sins, in the resurrection of the flesh and in the life eternal: "*Credo in sanctorum communionem, remissionem peccatorum, carnis resurrectionem, vitam æternam. Amen.*"

(Signed) D. J. CARD. MERCIER,
Archbishop of Malines

VI.

An Appeal to Truth

*Letter addressed to their Eminences the Cardinals
and their Lordships the Bishops of Germany,
Bavaria and Austria-Hungary.*

November 24th, 1915.

YOUR EMINENCES AND YOUR LORDSHIPS,

For a year, we Catholic Bishops—you, the Bishops of Germany on the one hand, and we, the Bishops of Belgium, France, and England, on the other—have presented a disconcerting spectacle to the world.

Hardly had the German armies trodden the soil of our country, when the rumour spread among you that our civilians were taking part in military operations ; that the women of Visé and of Liége were gouging out the eyes of your soldiers ; that the populace at Antwerp and at Brussels had plundered the property of expelled Germans.

In the first days of August, Dom Ildefonsus Herwegen, Abbot of Maria-Laach, sent a telegram to the Cardinal Archbishop of Malines, begging him, for the love of God, to protect the German

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soldiers from the tortures which our fellow citizens were supposed to be inflicting on them.

But it was common knowledge that our Government had taken all necessary measures to ensure that all citizens were instructed in the laws of war : in every parish the inhabitants were obliged to leave their weapons at the Town Hall ; the people were warned by means of notices, that the only citizens authorised to bear arms were those regularly enrolled in the Army ; and the clergy, anxious to second the authority of the State, had given circulation to the instructions, published by the Government, orally, by parish notices, and by posting bills on the church doors.

Having been accustomed for a century to a reign of peace, we had no idea that anyone could honestly impute violent instincts to us. Strong in our integrity and in the sincerity of our peaceful intentions, we replied to the slanderous charges of *francs-tireurs* and " gouged eyes " by a shrug of the shoulders, convinced that the truth would not be long in manifesting itself.

The Belgian clergy and episcopate were in personal relations with many priests, monks and bishops of Germany and of Austria ; the Eucharistic Congresses of Cologne in 1909 and of Vienna in 1912 had given them the opportunity of knowing one another more closely and of mutually appreciating one another. We had also the

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assurance that the Catholics of the nations at war with ours would not judge us hastily ; and, without being much disturbed by the contents of the telegram of Dom Ildefonsus, the Cardinal of Malines contented himself with begging him to unite with us in preaching humanity ; “ for,” he added, “ we are informed that the German troops are shooting innocent Belgian priests.”

From the very first days of August crimes had been committed at Battice, Visé, Berneau, Herve, and elsewhere, but we tried to hope that they would remain isolated cases, and knowing the very distinguished connections of Dom Ildefonsus, we put great reliance on the following declaration, which he was good enough to send us on August 11th : “ I am informed, on the highest authority, that a formal order has been given by the military command to the German soldiers to spare the innocent. As regards the very deplorable fact that even priests have lost their lives, I would call your Eminence’s attention to the circumstance that the costumes of priests and monks have lately become objects of suspicion and offence, since French spies have made use of the ecclesiastical costume and even of that of nuns, in order to disguise their hostile intentions.”

Nevertheless, the acts of hostility against the innocent population continued.

On August 18th, 1914, the Bishop of Liège

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wrote to Commandant Bayer, Governor of the town of Liège: "Several villages have been destroyed one after the other; well-known people, among them some priests, have been shot; others have been arrested, and all have protested their innocence. I know the priests of my diocese; I cannot believe that a single one of them has been guilty of acts of hostility towards German soldiers. I have visited several field-hospitals, and I have seen that the German wounded are cared for there with the same attention as the Belgian. They admit it themselves."¹

No reply was received to this letter.

At the beginning of September the German Emperor lent the weight of his authority to the scandalous accusations of which our innocent people were the object. He sent to Mr. Wilson, the President of the United States, a telegram, which, as far as we know, has not been withdrawn to this hour: "The Belgian Government has publicly encouraged the civilian population to take part in this war, for which it has been long carefully preparing. The cruelties committed in the course of this guerilla warfare by women and

¹ See in the annex the complete text of the letter of the Bishop of Liège (Annex I.). The protest was repeated on August 21st to General Kolewe, who had become Military Governor of Liège; then on August 29th to His Excellency, Baron von der Goltz, Governor-General of the occupied provinces of Belgium, and residing, at this time, in the episcopal palace of Liège.

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even by priests on doctors and nurses have been such that my Generals have been obliged at last to have recourse to the severest measures to punish the guilty and to hinder the blood-thirsty population from continuing to commit these abominable crimes. Several villages, and even the town of Louvain, have had to be destroyed (except the very beautiful Town Hall) for our defence and the protection of my troops. My heart bleeds when I see that such measures are rendered inevitable, and when I think of the numberless innocent people who have lost their homes and property in consequence of the crimes in question."

This telegram was posted up in Belgium by order of the German Government on September 11th. The very next day, September 12th, the Bishop of Namur asked for an interview with the Military Governor of Namur, and protested against the accusation which the Emperor sought to make against the Belgian clergy. He maintained the innocence of all the members of the clergy who had been shot or ill-treated, and declared that he was himself ready to publish any guilty deeds which were in reality established.

The offer of the Bishop of Namur was not accepted, and his protest had no result.

Calumny was thus given a free course. The German Press fomented it. The organ of the Catholic Centre, the *Cologne Peoples' Gazette*,

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rivalled the Lutheran Press in its chauvinism, and on the day when thousands of our fellow citizens (ecclesiastics and laity from Visé, Aerschot, Wesemel, Hérent, Louvain, and twenty other localities, as innocent of deeds of war or of cruelties as you and we), were taken prisoners, led through the stations of Aix-la-Chapelle and Cologne, and for hours were exhibited as a spectacle for the morbid curiosity of the Rhenish metropolis, they had the pain of finding that their Catholic brethren poured out as many insults on them as the Lutherans of Celle, Soltau and Magdebourg.

Not a voice in Germany was raised in defence of the victims.

The legend, which turned innocent into guilty and crime into an act of justice, thus gained credence, and, on May 10th, 1915, the *White Book*, the official organ of the German Empire, did not scruple to repeat the same charges, and to circulate in neutral countries these odious and cowardly lies. "It is indisputable that German wounded have been robbed, murdered, and even frightfully mutilated by the Belgian population, and that even women and young girls have taken part in these abominations. The eyes of wounded Germans have been gouged out, their ears, noses, fingers, and sexual organs cut off, or their bowels opened. In other cases German soldiers have

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been poisoned, hanged from trees, sprinkled with boiling liquids, and sometimes burnt, so that they have died in frightful agony. These brutish proceedings of the population not only violate the rules expressly laid down by the Geneva Convention as to the care and attention due to the enemy wounded, but are contrary to the fundamental principles of the laws of war and of humanity.' " ¹

Put yourselves, for a moment, in our place, dear Brethren in the faith and priesthood.

We know that these shameless accusations of the Imperial Government are calumnies from end to end. We know it, and we swear it.

Now, your Government, to justify them, calls evidence which has not been submitted to any cross-examination.

Is it not your duty, not only in charity, but in strict justice, to enlighten yourselves and your flocks, and to furnish us with the opportunity of establishing our innocence legally ?

You already owed us this satisfaction in the name of Catholic charity, which is above national struggles ; you owe it to us to-day in strict justice, because a Committee, which has at least your tacit approval, and is composed of the most highly esteemed politicians, scientists and theologians in Germany, has supported the official accusations,

¹ Die Völkerrechtswidrige. Führung des Belgischen Volksskreig : Denkschrift (S 4).

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and has entrusted to the pen of a Catholic priest, Professor A. J. Rosenberg, of Paderborn, the task of summing them up in a book, entitled *The Lying Accusations of the French Catholics against Germany*. It has thus thrown upon Catholic Germany the responsibility for the active and public propagation of the calumny against the Belgian people.

When the French book, in reply to which the German Catholics publish their own, came out, their Eminences, Cardinal von Hartmann, Archbishop of Cologne, and Cardinal von Bettinger, Archbishop of Munich, felt impelled to send a telegram to their Emperor in these terms: "Revolted by the libels against the German Fatherland and its glorious army, contained in the work *The German War and Catholicism*, we feel in our hearts the necessity of expressing our sorrowful indignation to your Majesty in the name of all the German Bishops. We shall not fail to make our complaint to the Supreme Head of the Church."

Now, most reverend Eminences and venerated colleagues of the German Episcopacy, in our turn, we, Archbishops and Bishops of Belgium, revolted by the calumnies against our Belgian land and its glorious army, contained in the Imperial *White Book*, and reproduced in the reply of the German Catholics to the work of the French Catholics, we also feel impelled to express to our King, to our

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Government, to our army, and to our country our sorrowful indignation.

And in order that our protest should not stand in conflict with yours without any useful result, we ask you to agree to help us to set up a tribunal to hear both sides. You will appoint, by virtue of your office, as many members as you wish and such as you please to choose. We will appoint the same number—for instance, three on each side. We will join in asking the Bishops of a neutral State, Holland, Spain, Switzerland, or the United States, to choose us an arbitrator, who will preside over the sittings of the tribunal.

You have carried your complaints to the Supreme Head of the Church.

It is not just that he should hear your voice only.

You will be honest enough to help us to make ours heard.

Both you and we have the same duty—to lay before His Holiness attested documents on which he may be able to found his decision.

You are not ignorant of the efforts which we have repeatedly made to obtain from the Power, which is in occupation of Belgium, the establishment of a tribunal of inquiry.

The Cardinal of Malines, on two occasions, in writing, January 24th, 1915, and February 10th, 1915, and the Bishop of Namur, in a letter to the

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Military Governor of his Province, April 12th, 1915,¹ urged the establishment of a tribunal to be composed of an equal number of German and Belgian arbitrators and presided over by a representative of a neutral State.

Our solicitations met with an obstinate refusal. Yet the German authorities were careful to set up inquiries ; but they wanted them to be one-sided, that is, without any legal value.

After having refused the inquiry which the Cardinal of Malines asked for, the German authorities proceeded to various localities, where priests had been shot and peaceable citizens massacred or made prisoners, and there took the depositions of witnesses, some of whom were chosen indiscriminately and others carefully selected. Sometimes it was in the presence of a representative of the local authority, who was ignorant of the German language, and so was obliged to accept and to sign on trust the official reports. They believed in this way they could form conclusions which might afterwards be presented to the public as the results of examination and cross-examination.

The German inquiry at Louvain in November, 1914, was conducted under these conditions. It is thus devoid of authority.

So it is natural that we should turn to you.

¹ See Annex II.

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You will grant us the Court of Arbitration, which the occupying Power has refused us. You will obtain for us from your Government a public declaration that the witnesses will be asked by you and us to tell all they know without fear of reprisals. Before you, under the shelter of your moral authority, they will feel more secure, and will be encouraged to relate what they have seen and heard ; the world will have faith in the Episcopate of our two united countries ; our joint control will guarantee the authenticity of the witnesses and the fidelity of the official reports. An inquiry, so conducted, will inspire confidence.

We ask for this inquiry, your Eminences and venerated Colleagues, above all, to avenge the honour of the Belgian people. Slanders on the part of your people and its highest representatives have violated it. You know, as well as we, the adage of theology, moral, human, Christian and Catholic—no pardon without restitution : *Non remittitur peccatum, nisi restituatur ablatum.*

Your people, through the mouthpiece of their political powers and highest moral authorities, have accused our fellow citizens of having committed atrocities and horrors upon wounded Germans, of which the *White Book* and the Catholic manifesto, above mentioned, pointed out the details ; we oppose a formal denial to all these accusations, and we ask to be allowed to

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prove the facts upon which we found this denial.

In return, in order to justify the atrocities committed in Belgium by the German army, the political Power by the very heading of the *White Book*, *Die Volkerrechtswidrige Fñhrung des Belgischen Volkskriegs* (The violation of international law by the methods of war employed by the Belgian people), and the hundred Catholic signatories of the work, *The German War and Catholicism : a German reply to French attacks*, affirm that the German army in Belgium legitimately defended itself against a treacherous organisation of *francs-tireurs*.

We declare that nowhere in Belgium was there an organisation of *francs-tireurs*, and we claim the right to prove the truth of our assertion in the name of our calumniated national honour.

You will call whom you wish before the tribunal, at which all parties will be present. We will invite to appear there all the priests of the parishes where civilians, priests, monks, or laymen were put to death or threatened with death to the cry of *Man hat geschossen* (someone has fired). We will ask all these priests, if you wish to sign their depositions on oath, and then, at the risk of maintaining that all the Belgian clergy is perjured, you will be obliged to accept the conclusions of this solemn and decisive inquiry, and the civilised world will be also unable to deny them.

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But, your Eminences and venerated Colleagues, we should remind you that you have the same interest as ourselves in setting up a court of honour.

For we, through direct experience, know and declare that the German army gave itself up in Belgium, in a hundred different places, to plundering, incendiarism, imprisonments, massacres and sacrileges, contrary to all justice and to every sentiment of humanity.

We declare this, notably in the cases of the communes, the names of which appeared in our Pastoral Letters and in the two notes addressed by the Bishops of Namur and of Liège, on October 31st and November 1st, 1915, respectively, to His Holiness, Pope Benedict XV., to His Excellency, the Nuncio at Brussels, and to the ministers or representatives of neutral countries in residence at Brussels.¹

Fifty innocent priests and thousands of innocent Catholics were put to death ; hundreds of others, whose lives have been saved by circumstances independent of the will of their persecutors, were in danger of death ; thousands of innocent persons, with no previous trial, were imprisoned ; many of them underwent months of detention, and, when they were released, the most minute questioning,

¹ See Annex III.

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to which they were submitted, revealed no guilt in any of them.

These crimes cry to heaven for vengeance.

If, in formulating these denunciations, we are calumniating the German army, or, if the military authority had just reasons for commanding or permitting those acts which we call criminal, it is to the honour and the national interest of Germany to confute us. So long as German justice is denied we claim the right and the duty of denouncing what, in all sincerity, we consider as a grave attack on justice and on our honour.

The Chancellor of the German Empire, at the sitting on August 4th, declared that the invasion of Luxembourg and of Belgium was "contrary to the principles of international law." He recognised that, "in disregarding the rightful protestations of the Governments of Luxembourg and of Belgium, he committed a wrong which he promised to make good." The Pope, alluding intentionally to Belgium, as well as condescending to write in that sense to the minister, Monsieur van der Heuvel, by his Eminence, Cardinal Gasparri, Secretary of State, pronounced in his Consistorial address of January 22nd, 1915, this irrevocable decision: "It appertains to the Roman Pontiff, whom God has set up as sovereign interpreter and avenger of 'eternal law,' to proclaim, before all

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things, that no one can for any reason whatever violate justice."

Since then, however, politicians and casuists have attempted to evade or to weaken those decisive words. In their reply to the French Catholics, the German Catholics indulge in the same paltry subtleties, and would like to prove them by a fact. They have at their disposal two testimonies : one, anonymous, from someone who said he saw on July 26th some French officers on the Boulevard Anspach, at Brussels, in conversation with some Belgian officers ; the other was from a certain Gustave Lochard of Rimogne, who deposes that " two regiments of French dragoons, the 28th and the 30th, and a battery crossed the Belgian frontier on the evening of July 31st, 1914, and remained entirely on Belgian soil for the whole following week."

Now, the Belgian Government declare " that before the declaration of war, no French troop, however small, had entered Belgium." And they add, " There is no honest evidence which can confute this assertion."

The Government of our King, therefore, declare the statement of the German Catholics to be an error.

Here we have a question of paramount importance, both political and moral, on which it is our duty to enlighten the public conscience.

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But if, nevertheless, you decline the examination of this general question, we would ask you, at any rate, to attempt to check the evidence upon which the German Catholics have relied as decisive against us. The deposition of this Gustave Lochard rests on facts easy to check. The German Catholics will be anxious to clear themselves of the reproach of error, and will make it a duty to their consciences to retract, if they have allowed themselves to be deceived to our prejudice.

We are well aware that you are reluctant to believe that the regiments whose discipline, honesty and religious faith you say you know, could have allowed themselves to commit the inhuman deeds with which we reproach them. *You want to persuade yourselves that it is not so, because it cannot be so.*

And, constrained by the evidence, we reply to you that it can be, because it is.

In face of facts no presumption holds good.

For you, as for us, there is only one issue : the proof of the facts by a commission whose impartiality is, and appears to all, unimpeachable.

We have no difficulty in understanding your feelings.

Pray believe that we also respect the spirit of discipline, of industry and of faith of which we had so often received proofs and witnessed the manifestations amongst your fellow countrymen.

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Very many are the Belgians who confess to-day the bitterness of their deception. But they have lived through the sinister events of August and September. In spite of themselves the truth has overcome their most deeply-rooted impressions. *The fact is no longer to be denied—Belgium has suffered martyrdom.*

When foreigners from neutral countries—Americans, Dutch, Swiss, Spaniards—question us as to the manner in which the German invasion was conducted, and when we tell them of certain scenes to the horror of which, in spite of ourselves, we are compelled to testify, we strive to lessen the impression, which the narrative would make, feeling that the naked truth passes the bounds of credibility.

Nevertheless, when, in presence of the whole evidence, you have been able to analyse the causes, both remote and immediate, of what one of your generals (in face of the ruins of the little village of Schaffen-lez-Diest, and the martyrdom of the pastor of the parish) called “ a tragic error ”; when you have heard of the influences which your soldiers were under at the moment they entered Belgium, in the intoxication of their first successes, the *à priori* unlikelihood of the truth will appear to you, as to us, less of a stumbling-block.

Above all, your Eminences and venerated Colleagues, do not allow yourselves to be kept

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back by the empty pretext that an inquiry to-day would be premature.

Strictly speaking, we might say so, on our side, because at the present hour the inquiry would take place under conditions unfavourable to us. Our population has been in truth so deeply terrified, the prospect of reprisals is still so threatening, that the witnesses, whom we shall call before a tribunal, consisting partly of Germans, will hardly dare to tell the complete truth.

But there are decisive reasons against any delay.

The first, which will most directly touch your hearts, is that we are the weak and you are the strong. You would not wish to abuse your power over us.

Public opinion ordinarily is with him who first makes himself master of it.

Now, while you have complete freedom to inundate neutral countries with your publications, we are imprisoned and reduced to silence. We are hardly allowed to raise our voices inside our churches ; the sermons in them are censored, that is to say travestied by hired spies ; conscientious protests are styled revolt against public authority ; our writings are stopped on the frontier, like an article of contraband. You alone enjoy freedom of speech and of pen, and if you are willing, through a spirit of charity and justice, to procure a little of the same freedom for

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the accused Belgians and to give them the opportunity of defending themselves, it is for you to come to their aid at the first possible moment. The old legal maxim, "*Audiatur et altera pars*," is inscribed, it is said, above many German law courts. In any case, with you, as with us, it embodies the law in the proceedings of the episcopal courts, and in your case, too, no doubt, as in ours, it is current in the popular tongue, under this image : " He who hears only one bell, hears only one sound."

Perhaps you will say : " It is past, forget it. Instead of throwing oil on the fire, rather turn your minds to forgiveness and unite your efforts with those of the occupying Power, which asks only to stanch the wounds of the unfortunate Belgian people."

Your Eminences and dear Colleagues, do not add irony to injustice.

Have we not suffered enough ? Have we not been, are we not yet, tortured cruelly enough ?

It is past, say you, resign yourselves, forget.

Past ! But all the wounds are bleeding ! There is not one honest heart which does not swell with indignation. When we hear our Government say in the face of the world : " He is twice guilty who, after having violated the rights of another, still attempts, with the most audacious cynicism, to justify himself by imputing to his

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victim faults which he has never committed," our good folk stifle their curses only by force. Only yesterday, a countryman of the neighbourhood of Malines learnt that his son had fallen on the battlefield. A priest was consoling him. The good man replied : " Oh ! him, I give him to the country. But my eldest, they took him from me, the——, and foully buried him in a ditch."

How do you think that we could obtain a sincere word of resignation and of pardon from these poor creatures who have known all these tortures as long as those, who have made them suffer, refuse to admit it, or to utter a word of regret, or a promise of reparation ?

Germany cannot now restore to us the blood which she has shed, the innocent lives which her arms have destroyed ; but it is in her power to restore to the Belgian people its honour which she has violated or permitted to be violated.

We ask this restitution from you—you who stand first among the representatives of Christian morality in the Church of Germany.

There is something more profoundly sad than political divisions and material disasters. It is the hatred which injustice, real or supposed, stores up in so many hearts created to love one another. Is it not upon us, the pastors of our people, that the duty lies of helping to get rid of these bad feelings, and of re-establishing on its foundations

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of justice, to-day so shaken, the union in love of all the children of the great Catholic family ?

The occupying Power speaks and writes of its intention to stanch our wounds.

But in the tribunal of the world intention is judged by action.

Now, all that we poor Belgians, who submit for a time to the domination of the Empire, know, is that the Power which has staked its honour to govern us according to International Law codified in the Hague Convention, is ignoring its engagements. We are not speaking of particular abuses committed against individuals or communes, the character of which can only be estimated by an investigation made after hearing both sides at the end of this war. We are considering at present only acts of the Government established by its official documents, posted up on the walls of our towns, and consequently involving directly its responsibility beyond any possible question.

Now the breaches of the Hague Convention, since the date of the occupation of our provinces, are numerous and flagrant. We set them out here under headings, and we shall provide, in an Annex,¹ the proof of our allegations. The following are the chief breaches :—

Collective punishments imposed on
account of individual acts, contrary to

¹ See Annex IV.

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Article 50 of the Hague Convention.

Compulsory labour for the enemy, contrary to Article 52 ;

New taxes, in violation of Articles 48, 49 and 52 ;

Abuse of requisitions in kind, in violation of Article 52 ;

Disregard of the laws in force in the country, contrary to Article 43.

These violations of International Law, which aggravate our unhappy lot and increase the ferments of revolt and hatred in hearts usually peaceable and kindly disposed, would not be continued if those who commit them did not feel that they were supported, if not by the positive approbation, at least by the complacent silence of all those who form public opinion in their own country.

Again then, we confidently appeal to your charity ; we are the weak, you are the strong ; come and judge whether it is still permissible for you to refuse your aid.

There are, moreover, in regard to the establishment of a commission of inquiry by members of the Catholic Episcopate, arguments of a general kind.

We have already dwelt upon this. The spectacle which our divisions afford to the world is disconcerting ; it is an occasion of scandal to it, and awakens in it blasphemous thoughts.

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Our people do not understand how you can be unaware of the two-fold flagrant iniquity that has been inflicted on Belgium—the violation of our neutrality and the inhuman conduct of your soldiers—or how, knowing it, you can refrain from raising your voice to condemn it, and to dissociate yourselves from it.

On the other hand, what ought to scandalise *your* population, Protestant and Catholic, is the rôle ascribed by your Press to the Belgian clergy and to a nation over which, for the last thirty years, it is well known that a Catholic Government has ruled. "Take care," said the Bishop of Hildesheim to his clergy, no later than 21st September, 1914, "these charges which the Press is circulating against priests, monks and nuns of Catholic nations are making a rift between the Catholics and Protestants on German soil, and the religious future of the Empire is imperilled."¹

¹ Denn es handelt sich bei solchen Gerüchten nicht nur um die Ehre von Konfratres, sondern auch um Gefährdung heiliger Interessen des Katholischen Volkes im Deutschland. Sind doch solche Gerüchte dazu angetan, das friedliche Verhältnis unter den Angehörigen der verschiedenen Konfessionen langsam zu untergraben, Misstrauen gegen den Klerus überhaupt hervorzurufen und unter den in der Diaspora lebenden Katholiken tiefe Verstimmung und Verwirrung anzurichten. Daher ist es für den Diasporapfarrer doppelt notwendig, gegenüber den in seiner Gemeinde etwa umlaufenden Verdächtigungen des Klerus besonders Wachsam zu sein.

Dr. Adolf Bertram, Bischof von Hildesheim: *Wachsamkeit gegenüber Verdächtigungen des Klerus.*

("For in such rumours it is not only a question of the

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The campaign of calumnies against our clergy and our people has not slackened. Erzberger, a deputy of the Centre, seems to have taken upon himself to increase it. In Belgium itself, in the Cathedral of Antwerp, on the sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost, one of your priests, Heinrich Mohr, dared to declare from the pulpit of truth to the Catholic soldiers of your army: "Official documents have informed us how the Belgians have hanged German soldiers on trees, sprinkled them with boiling liquid and burnt them alive."¹

honour of colleagues, but also the endangering of the holy interests of the Catholics in Germany. These rumours, indeed, are calculated to undermine slowly the peaceful relations between the members of the different faiths, to bring about mistrust, particularly towards the clergy, and to cause deep vexation and confusion amongst Catholics in non-Catholic countries. For this reason it is particularly important for the priest in non-Catholic countries to be on his guard against the insinuations which may be current in his parish with regard to the clergy.")

Dr. Adolf Bertram, Bishop of Hildesheim: *Vigilance as to insinuations as regards the clergy.*

¹ Man hat in den Amtlichen Berichten entsetzliche Dinge gelesen. . .

Wie die Belgier deutsche Soldaten an den Bäumen aufhängten, mit heizem Teer Verbrühten und lebendig anzündeten. *Feldpredigt auf dem 16^{ten} Sonntag nach Pfingstern* von Dr. Heinrich Mohr. Le sermon a été publié dans le périodique: *Die Stimme der Heimat*, No. 34, Freiburg in Br. 1915. Herder.

("We have read horrible things in the official reports: how the Belgians hanged German soldiers on the trees, and scalded them with hot tar and burnt them alive." A sermon on the 16th Sunday after Pentecost, by Heinrich Mohr, Chaplain to the Forces. The sermon has been published in the periodical, *The Voice of Home*, No. 34, Freiburg in Br. 1915. Herder.")

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There is only one means of stopping these calumnies, and that is to bring the whole truth to the light of day, and to condemn the true culprits publicly by religious authority.

There is another source of scandal for honest men, believers or non-believers, in the habit of giving prominence to the advantages and the disadvantages which Catholic interests would derive from the success either of the Triple Alliance or of the Quadruple Entente. Professor Schrörs, of the University of Bonn,¹ was the first, so far as we know, to devote his leisure to these alluring calculations.

The religious results of the war are the secret of God, and none of us is in the Divine confidence.

But there is a higher question than that—the question of morality, of right, of honour.

“Seek ye first,” said our Lord in the Holy Gospel, “the Kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you.”

Do your duty, come what may !

Also we bishops at this present moment have a moral duty, and therefore a religious one, which takes precedence of all others, that of searching out and proclaiming the truth.

Did not Christ, whose disciples and ministers we have the distinguished honour to be, say: “For

¹ *Der Krieg und der Katholizismus*, by Dr. Heinrich Schrörs, Professor of Catholic Theology in the University of Bonn.

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this came I into the world, that I should give testimony to the truth.”¹ “*Ego ad hoc veni in mundum, ut testimonium perhibeam veritati.*”

On the solemn day of our episcopal consecration we vowed to God and the Catholic Church never to forsake the truth, to yield neither to ambition nor to fear when it should be necessary to show our love for it. *Veritatem diligat, neque eam unquam deserat aut laudibus aut timore superatus.*²

We have, therefore, in virtue of our vocation, a common rôle and a ground of sympathy. Confusion reigns in men's minds ; what some call light, others designate as darkness ; what is good to one is bad to another. We cherish the hope that the tribunal of impartial inquiry to which we have the honour of inviting your delegates, will help to dissipate more than one uncertainty : *Non ponat lucem tenebras, nec tenebras lucem ; non dicat malum bonum, nec bonum malum.* With all the warmth of his prayers, our Holy Father the Pope calls for peace ; in the last letter he deigned to address to you at Fulda, after your last meeting, he urged you—he urges us all—to long for it with him. But he desires it only if it is based on respect for the rights and dignity of nations.³

¹ St. John xviii., 37.

² *Pontificale Romanum* : de consecratione electi in episcopum.

³ *Acta Apostolicæ Sedis*—Vol. VII., October 6th, 1915.

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Dum votis omnibus pacem expetimus, atque eam quidem pacem quae et iustitiae sit opus et populorum congruat dignitati.

We shall respond then to the desire of our common Father by working together to cause Truth to shine forth and triumph, Truth on which must rest justice, the honour of nations and at length peace.

We are, your Eminences and venerated Colleagues, your respectful servants and devoted brothers.

D. J. CARD. MERCIER, *Archbishop of Malines.*

¹ ANTOINE, *Bishop of Ghent.*

GUSTAVE J., *Bishop of Bruges.*

THOMAS LOUIS, *Bishop of Namur.*

MARTIN, HUBERT, *Bishop of Liège.*

AMÉDÉE CROOIJ,
Bishop Designate of Tournai.

¹ The Belgian bishops unanimously decided to address a joint letter to the German bishops. They have one and all knowledge of the scheme of the present letter and have given their adherence to it ; but, owing to the difficulty of communicating with the Bishops of Ghent and Bruges, it has been impossible to submit to them this letter as it was finally drawn up, and obtain their signatures to it.

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ANNEX I.

A letter addressed by his lordship the Bishop of Liège, to Commandant Bayer, Governor of Liège, under date of August 18th, 1914.

MONSIEUR LE COMMANDANT,

I address myself to you as a man and a Christian, and entreat you to put an end to the executions and reprisals. I have been informed time after time that several villages have been destroyed, that persons of note, some of whom were priests, have been shot ; that others have been arrested, and that all have protested their innocence. As for such as are priests in my diocese, I cannot believe that a single one has been guilty of acts of hostility towards German soldiers. I have visited several field hospitals, and I have seen that the wounded Germans there are cared for with the same attention as the Belgians. They admit it themselves. If soldiers of the Belgian Army, stationed at the outposts, fired on the Germans entering Belgium, is that a crime to be imputed to the civilian population ? And even if some civilians had helped the soldiers to drive back the German scouts, can the entire population, women, children, and priests, be held responsible for it ?

But I do not wish to discuss past acts ; I only ask you, in the name of God and of humanity, to prevent reprisals upon unoffending populations.

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These reprisals can have no useful end, but will drive the population to despair. I shall be happy to discuss this subject with you, for I am confident that you, like myself, wish to lessen the evils of war rather than to increase them.

At the last moment I hear that the *Curé* of R. has been arrested and taken to the Chartreuse. I do not know of what he is accused, but I do know that he is incapable of committing an act of hostility towards your soldiers; he is a good priest, gentle and charitable. I will be answerable for him, and I beg you to restore him to his parish.

Yours, etc.,

(Signed) M. H. RUTTEN,
Bishop of Liége.

This letter received no acknowledgment, but the same protests were renewed, on August 21st, to General von Kolowe, who had meanwhile become Military Governor of Liége.

The same protests, strongly put and energetically urged, were renewed on August 29th in an interview with the Governor-General of occupied Belgium, von der Goltz Pasha, then residing in the episcopal palace with his staff.

(Signed) M. H. RUTTEN,
Bishop of Liége.

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ANNEX II.

This Annex contains :—

1. A letter from his Eminence Cardinal Mercier, Archbishop of Malines, to the Kreischef of the district of Malines, under date January 24th, 1915.

2. A communication from his Eminence the Cardinal of Malines, forwarded to the General Government through the agency of Adjutant von Flemming, under date February 10th, 1915.

3. A letter from the Lord Bishop of Namur, to the Military Governor of Namur, under date April 12th, 1915.

4. A note referring to a partial inquiry made by an Austrian priest appointed by the *Wiener Priester Verein*.

5. Correspondence of the Cardinal of Malines with his Excellency the German Governor-General on the question of outrages suffered by the nuns.

1. In his pastoral letter of Christmas 1914, the Cardinal of Malines published the names of the innocent priests who had been put to death by the German troops.

Count von Wengersky, Kreischef of the District of Malines, wrote to the Cardinal on January 20th as follows :—

The Kreischef Tgb. No. 268/II.

Malines, January 20th, 1915.

TO HIS EMINENCE THE CARD. ARCHBP. OF MALINES,
According to a newspaper notice, several

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innocent priests are stated to have been put to death in the diocese of Malines.

In order that an inquiry may be set on foot, may I beg your Eminence to be so good as to let me know whether any innocent priests, and, if so, which, have been put to death in the diocese of Malines.

I am very anxious to learn what circumstances have led up to this, which troops prove to be concerned, and on which days it happened.¹

The Kreischef,
(Signed) WENGERSKY,
Colonel.

The Cardinal replied as follows to Count von Wengersky :—

The Palace of the Archbishop, Malines.
January 24th, 1915.

M. LE KREISCHEF,

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter, 268/II, dated January 20th, which you have been so good as to address to me.

¹ Der Kreischef Tgb. No. 268/II. Mecheln, den 20.1.1915.
An Seine Eminenz den Kardinal Erzbischof
von Mecheln.

Nach einer Zeitungsnotiz sollen in dem Bistum Mecheln mehrere Priester unschuldig getötet worden sein.

Um eine Nachforschung einleiten zu können, bitte ich Euer Eminenz um gefällige Mitteilung, ob und welche Priester des Bistums Mecheln unschuldig getötet worden sind.

Es wäre mir sehr erwünscht, zu erfahren, welche Umstände hierzu geführt haben, welche Truppen eventuell in Betracht kommen, und an welchen Tagen dieses geschehen ist.

Der Kreischef,
(Gez.) WENGERSKY,
Oberst.

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The names of the priests and monks of the diocese of Malines, who, to my knowledge, were put to death by the German troops, are as follows : Dupierreux, of the Company of Jesus ; Brother Sebastien Allard, of the Society of St. Joseph ; Brother Candide, of the Society of the Brothers of Our Lady of Pity ; Father Vincent, Conventual Carette, a professor ; Lombaerts, Goris de Clerck ; Dergent, Wouters, Van Bladel, *curé*s.

At Christmas time I was not perfectly certain what had been the fate of the *Curé* of Hérent. Since then his dead body has been discovered at Louvain and identified.

Other figures quoted in my pastoral letter must be increased to-day. Thus for Aerschot I gave the number of victims as 91. Now the total number of bodies of natives of Aerschot which have been exhumed had risen a few days ago to 143. But this is not the moment to dwell upon these particular cases ; the proper place to give an account of them will be at the inquiry of which you give me hopes.

It will be a consolation to me to have full light thrown upon the events which I was compelled to mention in my pastoral letter and on others of the same nature.

But it is essential that the results of this inquiry should be made plain to all upon indisputable authority.

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To ensure this, I have the honour to propose to you, M. le Comte, and, through your kind intervention, to the German authorities, that the commission of inquiry should be composed in equal numbers of German representatives and of Belgian magistrates, chosen by our Chief Magistrate, and presided over by a representative of a neutral country. I venture to hope that his Excellency, the United States Minister, would not refuse to accept this chairmanship, or to entrust it to a representative of his own choice.

I have the honour to be,

M. le Kreischef,

(Signed) D. J. CARD. MERCIER,

Archbishop of Malines.

Monsieur le Comte von Wengersky,

Kreischef Malines.

This request met with no reply.

2. On February 10th, 1915, Adjutant von Flemming called at the Palace of Malines, in the name of the Kreischef, to repeat verbally the questions to which the Cardinal had already replied in writing in his letter of January 24th. The Cardinal informed the Adjutant that questions of this nature must be formulated and answered in writing. In consequence, he drew up, in the following terms, the questions of the Kreischef and the replies which they admitted of, and the

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document was then signed by the Adjutant and the Cardinal of Malines.

The Palace of the Archishop, Malines.

Monsieur l'Adjutant von Flemming asks me, in the name of the General Government :—

1. Which are the communes where priests have been shot.

2. Which troops put them to death, and on what day.

3. Whether the bishop of the diocese maintains that these priests were innocent.

1. The names of the communes have been already printed in my pastoral letter of Christmas 1914, on page 65.

2. The German Staff is in a better position than anyone else to know what troops were occupying a commune on any particular day. The populations easily recognise the German uniform, but do not distinguish, for the most part, the regiments which compose the army.

3. My personal and reasoned conviction is that the priests whose names I have quoted were innocent. But, as a matter of law, it is not for us to establish their innocence ; it is for the military authorities who have treated them with this severity to establish their guilt.

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Witnesses summoned to give evidence before a one-sided committee will generally be afraid of telling the whole truth. This can only be fully known and universally accepted on the condition that a mixed commission should be formed to collect it and to guarantee its impartiality and exactitude.

Also I can only repeat for the third time my proposal¹ for a mixed commission, composed partly of German magistrates and partly of Belgian magistrates, whose work it would be to throw full light on those facts, concerning which the General Government most properly desires to institute an inquiry. In order to give all desirable authority to the results of the inquiry, it is of importance that the tribunal should be presided over by a representative of a neutral State.

Given at Malines, February 10th, 1915.

(Signed) D. J. CARD. MERCIER,
Archbishop of Malines.

(Signed) VON FLEMMING.
*Rittmeister und Adjutant des
Kreischefs in Mecheln.*

¹ The proposal was formulated a first time in writing on January 24th and repeated verbally on February 8th, by Monsignor van Roey, Vicar-General, who had been summoned to the Commandatur at Malines.

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This letter remained without reply.

3. On the occasion of the publication of a confidential letter from the Prussian Minister of War to the High Chancellor, his Lordship the Bishop of Namur published a reply to that document on April 12th, 1915.

But the Military Governor of Namur disputed the assertions contained in the bishop's reply, without, however, entering into any particulars.

The latter maintained his statements, and added: "In consideration of the difference of views which separates us, there is only one way of bringing the facts to the light and before the eyes of everyone, namely, to entrust their examination to the commission of inquiry which I have proposed. I am confident that your Excellency will agree with this, and will recommend the suggestion to the Governor-General."

(Signed) T. L., *Bishop of Namur.*

The proposal of the Bishop of Namur received no reply.

4. A priest accredited by his Eminence Cardinal Piff, Prince Archbishop of Vienna, made an inquiry in Belgium in the name of the *Wiener Priester Verein*. The results of this incomplete inquiry were published in the *Tijd*, of Amsterdam, and in the *Politiken*, of Copenhagen.

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They are overwhelmingly against the German military authorities. But, if we are correctly informed, the German and Austrian newspapers abstained from bringing them to the knowledge of their readers.

5. Before closing this Annex relating to the inquiries, we have to correct a mistake.

In their reply to the French Catholics, the German Catholics speak of the outrages upon the nuns, and write: "The German Governor-General in Belgium has addressed the Belgian bishops on this subject. . . . The Archbishop of Malines has allowed it to be known that he could furnish no exact information as to any case whatever of the outrages upon nuns in his diocese."

This last phrase is, in substance, correct; but gives a wrong impression to the casual reader. What I wrote to the Governor-General was, that I could furnish him with no exact information, because my conscience forbade me to hand over to a tribunal of any kind the information (alas! very precise) in my possession. Outrages have been committed upon nuns. I think they are, fortunately, not numerous; but to my knowledge there have been several. Since the Governor-General has thought himself entitled to give the public an extract from the reply I had the honour of addressing to him on this delicate subject, it

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is my duty to reproduce here the entire text of our correspondence.

The following is the letter of March 30th, 1915, written to me by the Governor-General :—

Brussels, March 30th, 1915.

The Governor-General of Belgium.

YOUR EMINENCE,

A serious reproach has of late been repeatedly made in the foreign Press, together with a number of other charges, which for the most part have already been proved incorrect, that German soldiers on the march through Belgium did not hesitate to assault Belgian nuns.

It is superfluous to point out, as to this, that such misdeeds (in case they should prove true) would certainly incur my own and the German Government's severest reprobation. At the same time justice demands that accusations proved to be untrue should be duly repudiated. I assume that the disclosure of the full truth corresponds with the sense of justice as well as with the interests of the Catholic Church.

I think, therefore, that I may rely upon your Eminence's cordial support when I beg you to help me in my efforts to discover the true facts.

The information which your Eminence may desire to bring forward as to the violation of nuns

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in the said diocese will enable me to take the further steps necessary under the circumstances.

I have the honour to be,

Your Eminence's most obedient,

(Signed) FHR. VON BISSING.¹

To his Eminence,

The Lord Archbishop of Malines.

¹ Der General-Gouverneur
in Belgien.

Brüssel, den 30 März 1915.

EUERE EMINENZ,

In der Ausländischen Presse ist in letzter Zeit wiederholt, neben einer Reihe anderer Anschuldigungen, die zum grössten Teil bereits als unberechtigt nachgewiesen sind, der schwere Vorwurf erhoben worden, deutsche Soldaten bei den Durchmarsch in Belgien nicht davor zurück geschreckt sich an belgischen Klosterfrauen zu vergeifen.

Es erübericht sich darauf hinzuweisen, dass derartige Vergehungen, falls sie sich als wahr herausstellen sollten, meiner und der deutschen Regierung schärfster Missbilligung sicher sind. Andererseits ist es eine Forderung der Billigkeit, als unwahr erwiesene Anschuldigungen gebührend zurückzuweisen.

Ich darf annehmen, dass die Aufdeckung der vollen wahrheit sowohl dem Gerechtigkeitsgefühl, wie den interessen der Katholischen Kirche in gleicher weise entspricht und ich glaube daher, auf Euer Eminenz gütige Unterstützung rechnen zu können, wenn ich bitte, mir in meinen Bemühungen um Klarlegung der Tatsachen behilflich zu sein.

Das Material, das Euere Eminenz über eventuelle Fälle von Schändung von Klosterfrauen in der dortigen Diözese vorlegen wollen, würde mich in Stand setzen, die nach Lage der Sache gebotenen weiteren Schritte zu tun.

Mit dem Ausdruck meiner vorzüglichsten Hochachtung habe ich die Ehre zu sein.

Euerer Eminenz sehr ergebener

(Signe) FHR. VON BISSING.

An Seine Eminenz

den Herrn Erzbischof von Mecheln in
Mecheln.

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This is our reply :—

The Palace of the Archbishop,
Malines.

April 16th, 1915.

MONSIEUR LE GOUVERNEUR-GÉNÉRAL,

I have received the letter No. 1243 which your Excellency has done me the honour of addressing me, and I regret having been hindered from replying to it earlier.

There are in fact rumours in circulation, accepted by certain papers, denied by others, on the question of the outrages which the Belgian nuns have had to suffer from German soldiers, and, in agreement with your Excellency, I protest against those who, lightly and without proof, publicly announce or support such odious accusations.

But, when your Excellency asks me to help you in throwing light upon whether these imputations are well or ill-founded, I am obliged to ask you a preliminary question.

Has the civil authority the right to hold an inquiry upon facts of so delicate a nature ?

Whom would it question ?

The confessor ? The doctor ? They are bound by professional secrecy.

The Sisters Superior ? Do they always know the truth ? And if they do know it, having learnt

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it under the seal of secrecy, have they the right to speak ?

Who would venture to question the victims ? Would not that be cruel ? Who would attempt to question witnesses at the risk of exposing the already wretched victims of violence to the burden of carrying the stain of dishonour in the face of public opinion.

So far as I am concerned, I should not dare to subject anyone to an examination upon so delicate a subject, and my conscience forbids me to hand over to another the confidences which have been made to me, or might be made to me spontaneously on this matter.

Our duty, your Excellency, is to discourage the public, by all means in our power, from giving countenance to these capricious and unwholesome allegations. I shall heartily approve of repression by law of those who, either from prejudice or from unpardonable levity, invent or spread them. But I consider that we cannot go further without trespassing upon the rights of conscience and exposing ourselves to the risk of violating its liberty.

Accept, Monsieur le Gouverneur-Général, the assurance of my very high regard,

(Signed) D. J. CARD MERCIER,
Archbishop of Malines.

To his Excellency, Baron von Bissing,
Governor-General, Brussels.

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ANNEX III.

We know, and we affirm, that the German army gave itself up in Belgium, in a hundred different places, to pillage, to incendiarism, imprisonments, massacres, and sacrileges, contrary to all justice and to every sentiment of humanity.

There are parts of Hainault and of the two Flanders, which are still to-day under special military control, whose disasters are consequently less well known to us. But below is an approximate list of localities which our protest covers.

I. DIOCESE OF NAMUR. *Provinces of Namur and of Luxembourg.*

Tamines, Surice, Spontin, Namur, Ethe, Gomery, Latour, Aische-en-Refail, Alle, Arsimont, Auvellais, Bonnines, Bourseigne-Neuve, Bouge, Daussois, Dourbes, Ermeton-sur-Biert, Evrehailles, Felenne, Fosses, Franchimont, Franc-Waret, Frasne, Gedinne, Gelbressée, Hansinelle, Hanzinne, Hautbois, Hastiere, Hermeton-sur-Meuse, Hingeon, Houdrémont, Jemeppe-sur-Sambre, Lisogne, Louette-Saint-Pierre, Mariembourg, Mettet, Monceau, Morville, Onhaye, Oret, Petigny, Romedenne, Somme-Leuze, Somzée, Stave, Temploux, Villers-en-Fagne, Wartet, Waulsort, Willersé, Yvoir, Anloy, Assenois, Baranzy, Batrix, Briscol, Étalle, Framont, Frêne-Opont,

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Freylange, Glaumont, Glaireuse, Hamipré, Herbeumont, Izel, Jéhonville, Maissin, Manhay, Musson, Mussy-la-Ville, Neufchâteau, Pin, Saint-Léger, etc., etc.

Thibessart, Biesme, Porcheresse, Graide, Nothomb, Rulles, Rosière-la-Grande, Bovigny, Gouvvy, Champion, Jamoigne, Silenrieux, Les Bulles, Tintigny, Ansart, Rossignol, Sorinne, Bièvre, Behême, Léglise, Laneffe, Frénois, Villers-devant-Orval, Couvin, Houdemont, Chiny, Anthée, Ychippe, Conneux, Aye, Évelette, Florenville, Hollogne, Le Roux, Leuze, Marche, Sainte-Marie, Saint-Vincent.

Andenne, Dinant.

2. DIOCESE OF LIEGE. *Provinces of Liège and of Limbourg.*

Battice, Herv, Visé, Mouland, Hermée, Hallem-baye, Louvegné, Lincé, Poulseur, Soumagne, Fecher, Melin, Julémont, Barchon, Lummen, Haelen,——, Lanaeken.

3. DIOCESE OF MALINES. *Provinces of Brabant and of Antwerp.*

Haekendover, Autgaerden, Grimde, Hougaerde, Cumplich, Hautem-Sainte-Marguerite, Vissenaeken, Bunsbeek, Lubbeek-Saint-Bernard, Wever, Attenrode, Cappellen (Glabbeek), Cortryck-Dutzel, Glabbeek, Pellenberg, Neer-Linter, Budingen, Heelenbosch, Orsmael-

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Gussenhoven, Corbeek-Loo, Lovenjoul, Roosbeek, Schaffen, Molenstede, Wersbeek, Aerschot, Rillaer, Gelrode, Wesemael, Hersselt, Rethy, Haecht, Rotselaer, Wackerzeel, Werchter, Tremeloo, Thildonck, Wespelaer, Boortmeerbeek, Rymenam, Hever, Louvain, Heverlé, Hérent, Berg, Campenhout, Bueken, Neder-Ockerzeel, Cortenberg, Delle, Boisschot, Goor, Heyst-op-den Berg, Beersel, Putte, Schrieck, Malines, Bonheyden, Wavre-Notre-Dame, Wavre-Sainte-Catherine, Waelhem, Leest, Hombeek, Sempst, Laer, Hofstade, Muysen, Schiplaeken, Konings-Hoyckt, Kessel, Lierre, Duffel, Blaesveld, Perck, Peuthy, Hautem, Elewytt, Weerde, Eppenheim, Pont-Brûlé, Grimberghen, Londerzeel, Meysse, Humbeek, Nieuwenrode, Beyghem, Wolverthem, Cappelle-au-Bois, Linsmeau, Wavre, Mousty.

4. DIOCESE OF GHENT. *Eastern Flanders.*
Saint-Gilles, Lebbeke, Termonde.

5. DIOCESE OF TOURNAI. *Province of Hainault Peronne.*

ANNEX IV.

INFRACTIONS OF THE HAGUE CONVENTION.

Germany signed the Hague Convention. The first German Governor-General, Baron von der Goltz, referred to the Hague Convention in an

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order published by him as early as November 12th, 1914.

The second German Governor-General, Baron von Bissing, in a solemn proclamation of July 18th, 1915, declared *his wish to administer Belgium according to the Hague Convention, regulating the laws and customs of war on land*. . . . He added : " His Majesty, the German Emperor, after the occupation of the kingdom of Belgium by our victorious troops, has entrusted to me the administration of this country, and *has ordered me to carry out the obligations arising from the Hague Convention*."

That is the legal aspect.

The following is the fact :—

I. COLLECTIVE PUNISHMENTS.

Article 50 of the Convention stipulates, " No collective penalty, pecuniary or otherwise, shall be enacted against populations on account of individual acts for which they could not be considered as jointly responsible."

Now the history of the occupation covers three periods : that of the invasion and those over which Baron von der Goltz and Baron von Bissing presided successively.

During the period of the invasion collective punishment was systematically inflicted and under every form. Proofs of this assertion abound.

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Here is one which suffices in itself:—As the invasion gained ground the Commander-in-Chief of the Army caused to be posted up a proclamation in three languages, on red paper, in which he said:—

The villages where acts of hostility shall be committed by the inhabitants against our troops *will be burned.*

For all destruction of roads, railways, bridges, etc., *the villages in the neighbourhood* of the destruction *will be held responsible.*

The punishments announced above will be carried out severely and without mercy. *The whole community will be held responsible.* Hostages will be taken largely. The heaviest war taxes will be levied.

Under the government of Marshal von der Goltz a proclamation, signed by the hand of the Governor-General and promulgated on September 2nd, 1914, in the occupied territory, expressly stated: "It is the hard necessity of war that the punishment of hostile acts *includes the innocent as well as the guilty.*"

Consequently collective punishment was applied unsparingly.

Thus, as a typical example, the city of Brussels was condemned to pay a fine of 5 millions, because one of its policemen, unknown to the communal

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administration, had been wanting in deference to a²functionary of the German civil administration.

A notice signed *Baron von der Goltz*, posted up on October 7th, 1914, applies the collective penalty to the family. It is there stated: "The Belgian Government have sent orders to rejoin the army to the militiamen of several classes. . . . All those who receive these orders are strictly forbidden to act upon them. . . . *In case of disobedience the family of the militiaman will be held equally responsible.*"

Under the Government of General Baron von Bissing, that is from December 3rd, 1914, the collective punishments, in violation of Article 50, have been continual. Here are some specimens. On December 23rd, 1914, a notice posted in Brussels stated: "If⁷the graves of fallen soldiers are damaged or violated, not only will the perpetrator be punished, but *the commune will also be made responsible.*"

A warning of the Governor-General, dated January 26th, 1915, renders the *members of the family* responsible if a Belgian fit for military service, between the ages of 16 and 40, goes to Holland.

In fact, upon the flimsiest pretexts, heavy fines are inflicted on communes. The commune of Puers was subjected to a fine of 3,000 marks

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because a telegraph wire was broken, although the inquiry showed that it had given way through wear.

Malines, a working-class town, without resources, has had a fine of 20,000 marks inflicted on it because the Burgomaster did not inform the military authority of a journey which the Cardinal, deprived of the use of his motor car, had been obliged to make on foot.

2. COMPULSORY LABOUR FOR THE ENEMY.

According to Article 52 of the ^{IV}Hague Convention, "*requisitions* in kind and *service*" can be claimed from communities or from inhabitants only on three conditions :

On condition that they do not place on the population any obligation to take part in the operations of war against the nation.

On condition that they are claimed only with a view to the needs of the army of occupation.

On condition that they are in proportion to the resources of those from whom they are demanded.

It is striking to observe that Article 23 contains a final note proposed at the second Hague Congress, in 1907, by the German delegation. It is as follows : " A belligerent is forbidden to force the subjects of an enemy country to take part in operations of war directed against their country."

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But—

1. *At the time of the invasion*, Belgian civilians, in twenty places, were made to take part in operations of war against their own country. At Termonde, Lebbeke, Dinant, and elsewhere in many places, *peaceable citizens, women and children were forced to march in front of German regiments* or to make a screen before them.

At Liége and at Namur, civilians were obliged to dig trenches and were employed on works of repairs at fortifications.

The system of hostages was carried out with a fierce cruelty. The proclamation of August 4th, quoted above, declared, without circumlocution : “ Hostages will be freely taken.”

An official proclamation, posted at Liége, in the early days of August, ran thus : “ Every aggression committed against the German troops by any persons other than soldiers in uniform, not only exposes the guilty person to be immediately shot, *but will also entail the severest reprisals against all the inhabitants and especially against those natives of Liége who have been detained as hostages* in the citadel of Liége by the Commandant of the German troops.”

These hostages are Monsignor Rutten, Bishop of Liége, M. Kleyer, burgomaster of Liége, the senators, representatives, and the permanent deputy and sheriff of Liége.

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2. *Under the government of Field-Marshal von der Goltz* the requisitions for personal service in force in the month of August were continued under every form—digging trenches, work on the fortifications, carting work on the roads, bridges, railways, etc.

An order of the Governor-General, published on November 19th, declared: “Whosoever attempts to prevent by force, *threat, persuasion*, or other means, any persons disposed to carry out any work for purposes required by the German authorities from so carrying out this work, or obstructs any contractors entrusted by such authorities with the execution of this work, will be punished with imprisonment.” The order does not fix the term of this imprisonment; it is a purely arbitrary measure. As to the treatment of hostages, severest measures were enacted.

A monstrous specimen of arbitrariness and cruelty is the proclamation posted in the communes of Beyne-Heusay, Grivegnée, Bois-de-Breux, by the Major in command, Dieckmann, on September 8th, 1914. Here follows an extract:—

“Beginning with September 7th, I shall permit persons from the undermentioned communes to return to their homes. To make sure that this permission will not be abused, the Burgomasters of Beyne-Heusay and of Grivegnée must at once

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prepare lists of persons who will be retained as *hostages* at the fort of Fléron.

"The lives of these hostages depend upon the inhabitants of the previously named communes comporting themselves peaceably under all circumstances."

"I shall designate the persons to be detained as hostages from mid-day on one day until the next mid-day. If the substitute has not appeared in due time, hostage remains another 24 hours at the fort. After this second 24 hours the *hostage runs the risk of death if the person concerned fails to appear. The priests and burgomasters and other members of the council are the first to be taken as hostages.*"

3. *Under the Government of Baron von Bissing* the violations of Article 52 were flagrant. The deeds which took place in the railway workshops at Luttre and Malines, as well as in several communes in Western Flanders, are revolting.

Judge of them :—

On March 23rd, 1915, at the arsenal at Luttre the German authority posted a notice demanding return to work. On April 21st 200 workmen were called for. On April 27th soldiers went to fetch the workmen from their homes and take them to the arsenal. In the absence of a workman, a member of the family was arrested.

However, the men maintained their refusal to

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work, "because they were unwilling to co-operate in acts of war against their country."

On April 30th the requisitioned workmen were not released, but shut up in the railway carriages.

On May 4th, 24 workmen detained in prison at Nevelles were tried at Mons, by a court-martial, "on the charge of being members of a secret society, having for its aim to thwart the carrying out of German military measures." They were condemned to imprisonment.

On May 8th, 1915, 48 workmen were shut up in a goods wagon and taken to Germany.

On May 14th, 45 men were deported to Germany.

On May 18th a fresh proclamation announced that the prisoners "would receive only dry bread and water, and hot food only every four days."

On May 22nd three wagons with 104 workmen were sent towards Charleroi.

In spite of all, the patriotic dignity of the workmen got the better of the pressure exerted on them.

A similar course was adopted at *Malines*, where, by various methods of intimidation, the German authorities attempted to force the workers at the arsenal to work on material for the railways, as if it were not plain that this material would become war material sooner or later.

On May 30th, 1915, the Governor-General announced that he "would be obliged to punish

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the town of Malines and its suburbs by stopping all commercial traffic if by 10 a.m. on Wednesday, June 2nd, 500 workmen had not presented themselves for work at the arsenal."

On Wednesday, June 2nd, not a single man appeared. Accordingly, a complete stoppage took place of every vehicle within a radius of several kilometres of the town.

It was at this time that the Cardinal's journey on foot was made from Malines to Eppeghem, a journey which cost the town of Malines a fine of 20,000 marks.

Several workmen were taken by force and kept two or three days at the arsenal.

The suspension of traffic lasted ten days.

The commune of *Sweveghem* (Western Flanders) was punished in June, 1915, because the 350 workmen at the private factory of M. Bekaert refused to make barbed wire for the German army. The following notice was placarded at *Menin* in July-August 1915:—

By order : From to-day the town will no longer afford aid of any description—including assistance to their families, wives, and children—to any operatives except those who work *regularly* at *military work*, and other tasks assigned to them. All other operatives and their families "can henceforward not be helped in any fashion."

Can anything be more odious ?

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Similar measures were taken in October 1914, at Harlebekelez-Courtrai, Bisseghem, Lokeren and Mons. From Harlebeke 29 inhabitants were transported to Germany. At Mons, in M. Lenoir's factory, the directors, foremen and 81 workmen were imprisoned for having refused to work in the service of the German army. M. Lenoir was sentenced to five years' imprisonment, the five directors to a year each, 6 foremen to six months, and the 81 workmen to eight weeks.

The General Government had recourse also to *indirect* methods of compulsion. It seized the Belgian Red Cross, confiscated its property, and changed its purpose arbitrarily. It attempted to make itself master of the public charities and to control the National Aid and Food Committee.

If we were to cite *in extenso* the decree of the Governor-General of August 4th, 1915, *concerning measures intended to assure the carrying out of works of public usefulness*, and that of August 15th, 1915, "*concerning the unemployed, who, through idleness, refrain from work*," it would be seen by what tortuous means the occupying Power attempts to attack at once the masters and the men.

But it is in the area of military operations that contempt of the Hague Convention has been pushed to an extreme.

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On October 12th, 1915, the Official Bulletin of Orders for the district under military operations published an order containing the following striking passages :—

“Article 1. Whoever, without reason, refuses to undertake or to continue work suitable to his occupation, and in the execution of which the *military administration is interested*, such work being ordered by one or more of the military commanders, will be liable to imprisonment not exceeding one year. He may also be transported to Germany.

Invoking Belgian laws or even international conventions to the contrary, can, in no case, justify the refusal to work.

On the subject of the lawfulness of the work exacted, the *military commandant has the sole right of forming a decision.*

Article 2. Any person who by force, threats, *persuasion* or other means attempts to influence another to refuse work as pointed out in Article 1, is liable to the punishment of imprisonment not exceeding five years.

Article 3. Whoever knowingly *by means of aid given or in any other way* abets a punishable refusal to work, shall be liable to a maximum fine of 10,000 marks, and, in addition, may be condemned to a year's imprisonment.

If communes or associations have rendered

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themselves guilty of such an offence the heads of the communes will be punished.

Article 4. In addition to the penalties stated in Articles 1 and 3, the German authorities may, in case of need, impose on communes, where, without reason, work has been refused, a fine or other coercive police measures.

This present decree comes into force immediately."

Ghent, October 12th, 1915.

Der Etappeinspekteur,

VON UNGER,

Generalleutnant.

The injustice and arbitrariness of this decree exceed all that could be imagined. Forced labour, collective penalties and arbitrary punishments, all is there. It is slavery, neither more nor less.

III. NEW TAXES.

We will content ourselves with pointing out, in a few words, two taxes contrary to Articles 48, 49, 51, and 52 of the Hague Convention.

The first was levied by a decree of Governor-General Baron von Bissing, on January 16th, 1915. It consists in imposing on absentees an additional extraordinary tax fixed at ten times the amount of the personal tax. This tax comes

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into no category of existing taxes. It strikes only at one class of citizens who have legitimately used their right of changing their places of residence before the occupation of the country. It is, then, contrary to Articles 48 and 51 of the Convention.

The second violation of the Convention is the famous contribution of 480 millions imposed on the nine provinces, December 10th, 1914.

The essential condition of the legality of a contribution of this kind, according to the Hague Convention, is that it should bear *relation to the resources of the country*—Article 52.

Now, in December 1914, Belgium was devastated. Contributions of war imposed on the towns and innumerable requisitions in kind had exhausted her. The greater part of the factories were idle, and in those, which were still at work, raw materials were, contrary to all law, being freely commandeered.

It was on this impoverished Belgium, living on foreign charity, that a contribution of nearly 500,000,000 frs. was imposed.

The decree of December 10th, 1914, ran : “ A contribution of war is imposed upon the Belgian people, amounting to forty million francs, to be paid monthly *for the period of one year*. This “ period of one year ” has now passed.

But, as we write these lines, the occupying

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Power proposes to replace " the period of a year " by " the whole duration of the war ! "

Poor little Belgium ! What has she done to rich and powerful Germany, her neighbour, to be so trodden under foot, tortured, calumniated, exploited and ground down by her ?

If we had to furnish a complete statement of the decrees and acts by which, to our knowledge, the occupying Power has contravened the Hague Convention, we should have to quote again *the abuse of requisitions in kind* contrary to Article 52 : *the seizure* of funds belonging to private companies, the requisition of railway lines for hundreds of kilometres ; the seizure of arms, deposited, by order of the Belgian Government, in the town halls —an abuse of *Article 53 ; the total disregard*, especially in the matter of the penal law, *of the laws in force in the country*, contrary to *Article 43*.

But we cannot say all here, nor quote all.

If, however, our readers wish for the proof of the accusations merely indicated in this final paragraph, we shall be glad to furnish them. There is not in our letter, nor in the four annexes, one allegation of which we have not the proof in our records.

VII.

My Return from Rome

Lent, 1916.

DEARLY BELOVED BRETHREN,

It would be impossible to express the joy I feel at being once more among you. Misfortune has brought us closer to each other. Like the early Christians, who, living under the menace of perpetual danger, were, as the Holy Scriptures tell us, "of one heart and of one soul—*Credentium erat cor unum et anima una*,"¹—the Belgians have gathered round their pastors; these pastors have felt the responsibilities and the ardours of paternity growing and expanding within them; and to-day, both in invaded Belgium and in foreign lands, the sons of our soil, obeying a common impulse, ask us, more urgently than ever, to be their interpreters with God, to tell them what divine Providence demands from them and allows them to hope for. "The High Priest," says the Apostle Paul, "taken from among men, is ordained for men in things that

¹ Acts iv. 32.

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pertain to God. *Pontifex, ex hominibus assumptus, pro hominibus constituitur in iis, quæ sunt ad Deum.*"¹

I am well aware how fervently and how devoutly you prayed for us during our journey. Your petitions have been granted. My first act on my return from Rome was to go into our dear Cathedral, to address a heartfelt *Te Deum* to the Lord, and to offer an act of ardent gratitude to our Blessed Mother, "the Cause of our Joy, *Causa nostræ lætitiæ*," as also the "Virgin of pain and tears, *dolorosa et lacrymabilis Virgo Maria*." Our Lord, indeed, has blessed our journey beyond anything that we dared to hope for.

There are many things I cannot tell you. You will understand me. The abnormal conditions, to which we have to submit, forbid us to lay bare to you all the best and most intimate things we hold in our soul for you ; things which, coming from a higher source and touching you more nearly, are my most steadfast support, and would be, if I could repeat them to you, your strongest consolation ; but you will not doubt my word ; you will believe me when I assure you that my journey was specially blest, and that I return to you happy, *very* happy.

Our Holy Father showed me the most touching kindness. As soon as I arrived, he deigned to fold me in his arms ; he invited me to come and see him

¹ Hebrews vi. 1.

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as often as possible; he allowed me to tell him everything, to confide in him fully, to think aloud before him. During the many hours I had the consolation of spending in his august presence, he comforted, illuminated, and encouraged me paternally. He understands and shares our anxieties concerning our religious liberties and our patriotic feelings. He was good enough to sum up his profound thought on your behalf, which I received most eagerly, in the inscription traced by his own august hand beneath his portrait; I here transcribe it for you in all simplicity:—

"To our revered brother Cardinal Mercier, Archbishop of Mechlin, We give the Apostolic Blessing with all our heart, assuring him that We are always with him, and that We share his grief and his anguish, inasmuch as his cause is our cause."

One day I went, with my heart full of gratitude, to tell the Sovereign Pontiff that he could never doubt the perfect filial piety of the Belgian people, and that we had conceived a desire to give him a fresh evidence of this in the near future. "Most Holy Father," I said, "we would like to ask the faithful, throughout the country, to take part on the first Sunday in May in a general communion for the intentions of your Holiness."

"*And my intention,*" replied the Holy Father immediately, "*is Belgium.*"

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Encouraged by this reception of my plan, I wrote to the Cardinals of Paris, London, Armagh in Ireland, and Italy, and I am confident that on the first Sunday in May, a common Eucharistic prayer will go up to Heaven from all the countries of our Allies ; presented to God by the august hands of the Head of the Catholic Church, this prayer will hasten the glorious restoration of our beloved Belgium. On that day the Holy Father gives all parish priests throughout the country power to bestow the Papal benediction on their flock, with a plenary indulgence applicable to the souls of soldiers who have fallen on the field of honour.

You have already, I believe, heard echoes of the acclamations with which the name of Belgium was greeted throughout our journey to Switzerland and Italy, and on our way back.

Even supposing, my beloved brethren, that the final issue of the gigantic duel at present being fought in Europe and Asia Minor is uncertain, the moral triumph of Belgium is an ever memorable fact for history and civilisation. In concert with your King and your Government, you agreed to an immense sacrifice in the interests of your fatherland. Out of respect for our plighted word ; to proclaim that in your consciences, right comes before all else, you have sacrificed your goods, your homes, your sons, your husbands ; and after eighteen months of coercion, you are still proud of your deed, as on the

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first day. Heroism seems so natural to you, that it does not occur to you to glory in it on your own account ; but if you had been able to do as we have done, to pass beyond our frontiers, and look at our Belgian fatherland from without ; if you could have heard the voices of the people, "the man in the street," as the English say, I mean the manual labourer, the humble *employe*, the women of the working classes ; if you had received the homage, written or spoken, of those who are the authorised representatives of the great social forces, politics, the press, science, art, diplomacy and religion ; you would have realised more fully the magnanimity of your attitude, and your souls would have leapt with joy and, even, I think, with pride.

The most fervid expressions of respect, of admiration, of reverence for the moral greatness, the nobility of soul, the calm tenacious patience of the Belgian nation reached us from the cities and villages of Switzerland, Italy, Spain, France and England, and went up, borne by enthusiasm, to those who personify Belgian patriotism, our Sovereigns, the Government, the Clergy, our valiant army.

As to us, all the homage we received we referred to you, for a secret instinct always reminded us that it was you who deserved it and attracted it by your endurance.

In our hours of meditation, we blessed Provi-

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dence for the progress it has brought about in public opinion.

You will remember how some fifteen months ago, we told you: Certain highly placed men, who ought to have taken a loftier view of events, sometimes went so far as to say: But after all, was it necessary for Belgium to sacrifice herself thus in defence of her territory? Would not a verbal protest have sufficed, and would this not have saved her from the ravages that have brought her to the verge of ruin? This language, I told you, had roused my indignation, and more than once I had given free utterance to that indignation under the stimulus of internal revolt.

Well! I never hear this language on any lips now.

Therefore the moral level of neutral, or formerly neutral nations, is higher. They understand the spirit of sacrifice, they do homage to it, they appreciate it in you, they admire you. Your generation has made a glorious entrance into history.

Is not this a conquest, my Brethren, and, in the sense in which moral advantage is more highly esteemed than material advantage, are you not the most glorious conquerors?

I cannot refrain from applying to our present situation the words of our Lord in the Gospel: "What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?"¹

¹ Matt. xvi. 26.

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Oh, yes! you weep, I know; there is mourning on every hand; the hearts of mothers, wives and betrothed maidens are wrung; lives are lost on the banks of the Yser; the captivity of the nation on its own soil is painfully prolonged; our finances are involved, our trade and our manufactures are at a standstill; I know all this, and you know me well enough, I think, to rest assured that I suffer because of them with you, and because you are suffering. But, after all, what are these sufferings of a day in face of the eternity in which we shall all sooner or later live our true lives? What, finally, is the value of an earthly success which we should have to buy at the price of our eternal happiness? What, on the other hand, is a momentary sorrow, an ephemeral desolation, a, humanly speaking, premature death, when we have the provision of an endless and unclouded happiness for those Christian families, who, having lived together as Christians here below, and having nerved themselves with Christian courage to self-sacrifice, will soon be re-united for ever in the bosom of our Father Who is in Heaven?

One day when I was making my way towards the Church of Saint Paul-without-the-Walls, accomplishing on your behalf the pilgrimage I had promised you before my departure that I would undertake, I visited the basilica of Saint Sebastian, and found it full of fragments, due to the excava-

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tions there in progress. The archæologists, who were directing the work, had brought various inscriptions to light. One of these struck me particularly, and I brought it away in my memory for you. It said: "*Et nos in Deo omnes. And as to us, let us all hold together in God.*"

Let us take this as the motto of our hopes; let it perfectly sustain our courage. "*Et nos in Deo omnes. All together in God.*"

The day will come when we shall weep no more, when we shall no longer be scattered, when our families will be re-united never to be parted again. Let us think more of Heaven than of earth. Let us live there in spirit; as Saint Paul said to the Philippians: "For our conversation is in Heaven. *Nostra autem conversatio in cælis est.*"¹

The Christian is a traveller, whose home is in Heaven.

You must remember that I have never concealed my forebodings from you. I have preached patriotism to you, because it is an off-shoot of the greatest of Christian virtues, Charity. But from the first I warned you, that in my humble opinion, our trial would be a long one, and that success would be the guerdon of the nations who can endure most bravely.

My conviction, both natural and supernatural, of our ultimate victory is more firmly rooted in my soul

¹ Philipp. iii. 20.

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than ever. If, indeed, it could have been shaken, the assurances given me by several disinterested and careful observers of the general situation, notably those belonging to the two Americas, would have sufficed to consolidate it.

We shall triumph, do not doubt it, but we are not yet at the end of our sufferings.

France, England and Russia have engaged not to conclude peace until the independence of Belgium is completely restored, and an ample indemnity has been made to her. Italy, in her turn, has given her adhesion to the London compact.

Our future is not doubtful.

But we must prepare it.

We shall prepare it by cultivating the virtue of patience, and the spirit of self-sacrifice. "Do ye manfully, and let your heart be strengthened, all ye that hope in the Lord," says the Psalmist. "*Viriliter agite et confortetur cor vestrum, omnes qui speratis in Domino.*"¹

Put your trust absolutely in Providence; it watches over those who reverence the Kingdom of God and of Justice. Whatever happens, never doubt of Justice. At no other period of my life have I seen its action penetrating, to all appearance, the most trivial circumstances, the most insignificant incidents, the events most foreign to our personal calculations, as in this recent journey

¹ Psalm xxxi. 24.

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of mine. "We know that to them that love God all things work together unto good," said Saint Paul. "*Scimus autem quoniam diligentibus Deum omnia co-operantur in bonum.*"¹

Are we not all and always, more than the lilies of the field, and the young bird that flutters in the branches, in the hand of the Most High? Draw your plans, set up your batteries, arrange your movements, but still man will propose and God will dispose.

"The king is not saved by a great army," says the Psalmist; "vain is the horse for safety, neither shall he be saved by the abundance of his strength. . . . Our soul waiteth for the Lord; for He is our helper and protector."²

Imagine a belligerent nation, sure of its army corps, its munitions, its commanders, with every prospect of gaining a victory. If God should allow the germs of an epidemic to spread among the ranks, all optimistic previsions would at once be brought to nought.

Therefore, above all things, put your trust in God. Invoke His favour by purifying your consciences. Cleanse your homes. Let purity, modesty and Christian simplicity reign there. Prepare in contrition for the performance of your Easter duties. Do not isolate yourselves in the Church. You are in her maternal breast; live in

¹ Rom. viii. 28.

² Psalm xxxiii. 16-20.

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her spirit. Lent is the season when the Church awaits in prayerful lamentation, in privation and suffering, reconciliation with her prodigal children, the birth of catechumens to divine life. Lament, pray, deny yourselves, suffer with your Mother.

As a general measure, we have thought it well to give you dispensation from the rules of fasting and abstinence, save on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, but if you do not feel the need for them, do not take advantage of all the dispensations; impose certain voluntary supererogatory mortifications upon yourselves. Apply yourselves to meditation; watch over your senses and the inclinations of your hearts, that your souls may freely soar to Him Who is your sole Good, and Who alone can give you peace, that is, serenity with order.

Pray, pray confidently, pray perseveringly. Pray at night with your families. Attend the Sunday Offices, Mass, Vespers and Benediction.

Above all, my beloved Brethren, attend the Holy Sacrifice of Mass whenever you have time, and participate in it by Holy Communion. At present many of you are less strenuously occupied than formerly, and are freer to dispose of your time. Could you not, by exerting your good will, spend half an hour at the foot of the altar, in a union of your souls with our Lord Jesus Christ, not only on Sundays, but daily, praying for our country, for our heroes on the Yser, living or dead, for those who

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are suffering and dying? He is there, our Divine Lord; He comes to remind us that He was pre-eminently "the Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with infirmity: *virum dolorum et scientem infirmitatum*;"¹ but He is risen. He is in the triumph of His glory at the right hand of the Eternal Father; and if He deigns to dwell among us, and to give Himself for our food in the Holy Eucharist, it is that He may fill us with His life, and help us to tread the path of suffering with Him, that so we may follow Him into the joy of the everlasting tabernacles. Courage, my Brethren, listen to my exhortations; attend Mass daily, take your missal with you, follow the priest closely in it, partake with him of the Eucharistic feast, and you will soon perceive that your life is being transformed, and that our Divine Jesus does not deceive us when He says: "Come to Me all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you. *Venite ad me omnes qui laboratis et onerati estis et ego reficiam vos.*"²

Let us more especially invoke Saint Joseph during this month of March, which popular piety dedicates to him. Let us celebrate his festival. Let us commend our families to him, and confide our soldiers to his care.

As we write this conclusion, the newspapers bring us a summary of a letter addressed by the

¹ Isaiah liii. 3.

² Matt. xi. 29.

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Sovereign Pontiff to the Cardinal Vicar, in which His Holiness expresses a dual wish, to which we hasten to respond.

The Holy Father implores Divine Mercy to put an end to the conflict which is steeping Europe in blood. During Lent we desire priests to replace the Collect *pro tempore belli* by the Collect *pro pace*.

The Holy Father further asks that, on Good Friday, all mourning mothers and wives should stand with the Mother of Jesus at the foot of the Cross and unite their sacrifice with the blood-stained Sacrifice of the Redemption. We will all associate ourselves with the ideas of His Holiness. Belgium has already been dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and to Saint Joseph. On Good Friday we will dedicate ourselves to the sorrowful and immaculate Heart of Mary. We delight in honouring the Immaculate Conception of the Holy Virgin, and this is well; but together with this privilege, freely conferred by God on her who was to be His Mother, let us remember the title Mary *acquired* by her sufferings to our gratitude. Pierced by the sword of spiritual martyrdom, the Heart of Mary voluntarily associated its *Compassion* with the Immolation of the Divine Victim of Calvary, for the redemption of our souls.

The evil hours we are experiencing urge us to have recourse more especially to the Mediation of our Lady of Sorrows.

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Therefore, in response to the ardent wish which has been expressed to me, I will, during the office of Good Friday, consecrate in the depths of my soul, my diocese, and as far as lies in my power, our dear country to the *sorrowful and immaculate Heart of Mary*. I exhort our priests to unite with me in this intention, and the faithful to repeat devoutly the following invocation, to which I have already, on a former occasion, attached an indulgence of 100 days: "*Sorrowful and immaculate Heart of Mary, pray for us, who ask thy help.*"¹

Lent en Indult for 1916

I. The double precept of fasting and abstinence is suspended throughout Lent of this year, save on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. Nevertheless, we warmly advise all persons who are able to do so, to make a free-will offering to God of their fasting and abstinence on Wednesday and Friday in every week during Lent.

II. It is still forbidden to eat both meat and fish at the same meal, even on Sunday. Soldiers, however, are allowed the use of both meat and other kinds of food at the same meal.

III. The use of milk and butter is permitted every day throughout Lent.

IV. The use of eggs, even on several occasions in one day, is permitted throughout Lent.

¹ *Hundred days of indulgence each time.*

MY RETURN FROM ROME

V. Persons are required to repeat three *Paters* and three *Aves*, and to say once the acts of faith, hope, charity, and contrition on each day when they avail themselves of the above dispensations. They may, however, free themselves of this obligation by means of a contribution placed in the Lenten alms-box by each person according to his devotion, such alms to be used for good works, to be determined by our judgment, and the received customs of the diocese.

The Feast of Saint Joseph, the patron saint of Belgium, is to be celebrated this year with special devotion.

This Pastoral Letter is to be read in all churches and chapels throughout the diocese, on the first Sunday after its reception.

Given at Mechlin under our signature and seal, and counter-signed by our Secretary.

† D. J. CARD. MERCIER,
Archbishop of Mechlin.

By command of His Eminence the Cardinal
Archbishop.

L. MEENS, *Secretary*.

VIII.

Per Crucem ad Lucem

"Jerusalem was made an habitation of strangers ;
her festival days were turned into mourning."

1ST BOOK OF MACHABEES,

Chapter I, verses 40, 41.

Brussels, 21 July, 1916.

BELOVED BRETHREN,

We ought to have met together here to celebrate the 85th anniversary of our national independence.

To-day, in fourteen years' time, our restored cathedrals and our rebuilt churches will be thrown widely open ; the crowds will surge in ; our King Albert, standing on his throne, will bow his unconquered head before the King of Kings ; the Queen and the Royal Princes will surround him ; we shall hear again the joyous peals of our bells, and throughout the whole country, under the vaulted arches of our churches, Belgians, hand in hand, will renew their vows to their God, their Sovereign, and their liberty, while the bishops and the priests, interpreters of the soul of the nation, will intone a

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triumphant *Te Deum* in a common transport of joyous thanksgiving.

To-day the hymn of joy dies on our lips.

The Jewish people in captivity at Babylon, sitting in tears on the banks of the Euphrates, watched the waters of the river flow by. Their dumb harps were hung on the willows by the bank. Who amongst them would have the courage to sing the song of Jehovah in a strange land? "O Jerusalem," cried the Psalmist, "if I forget thee, let my right hand be forgotten, let my tongue cleave to my jaws if I do not remember thee: if I make not Jerusalem the beginning of my joy."

The Psalm ends in imprecations: but we do not allow ourselves to repeat them: we are not of the Old Testament, tolerating the laws of retaliation: "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." Our lips, purified by the fire of Christian charity, utter no words of hate.

To hate is to make it one's object to do harm to others and to delight in so doing. Whatever may be our sufferings, we must not wish to show hatred towards those who have inflicted them. Our national unity is joined with a feeling of universal brotherhood. But even this feeling of universal brotherhood is dominated by our respect for unconditional justice, without which no relationship is possible, either between individuals or between nations.

PER CRUCEM AD LUCEM

And that is why, with St. Thomas Aquinas, the most authoritative teacher of Christian Theology, we proclaim that public retribution is a virtue.

Crimes, violation of justice, outrage on the public peace whether enacted by an individual or by a group must be repressed. Men's minds are stirred up, tortured, uneasy, as long as the guilty one is not put back in his place, as the strong, healthy, colloquial expression has it. To put men and things back in their places is to re-establish order, re-adjust the balance and restore peace on a just basis.

Public retribution in this sense may distress the affected sentimentality of a weak nature; all the same, it is, says St. Thomas, the expression and the decree of the highest, the purest form of charity, and of the zeal which is its flame. It does not make a target of suffering, but a weapon wherewith to avenge outraged justice.

How can one love order without hating disorder; intelligently wish for peace without expelling that which is destroying it; love a brother, that is to say wish him well, without desiring that willingly, or by force, his will shall bend before the unalterable edicts of justice and truth?

It is from these heights that one must view the war in order to understand the greatness of its extent.

Once more, perhaps, you will find yourself face

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to face with effeminate natures for whom the war means nothing beyond explosions of mines, bursting of shells, massacres of men, spilling of blood, piling up of corpses. You will meet politicians of narrow vision who see no further stake in a battle beyond the interest of one day, the taking of so much ground, of a stretch of country, or of a province.

But no. If, in spite of its horrors, war, I mean a just war, has so much austere beauty, it is because war brings out the disinterested enthusiasm of a whole people, which gives, or is prepared to give, its most precious possession, even life itself, for the defence and the vindication of things which cannot be weighed, which cannot be calculated, but which can never be swallowed up: Justice, Honour, Peace, Liberty!

Do you not feel that, in these two years, the war, the ardent unflagging interest which you give to it, purifies you, separates your higher nature from the dross, draws you away to uplift you towards something nobler and better than yourselves?

You are rising towards the ideals of justice and honour. They support you and draw you upwards.

And, because this ideal, if it is not a vain abstraction, which evaporates like the phantasies of a dream, must have its foundation in a living subject, I am never tired of maintaining this truth,

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which holds us all under its yoke. God reveals Himself as the Master, the Director of events, and of our wills, the holy Master of the universal conscience.

Ah, if we could clasp in our arms our heroes who are fighting for us over there, or are awaiting anxiously in the trenches their turn to go under fire; if we could take them by surprise, and feel the beatings of their hearts, would not each one of them say to us: I am doing my duty, I am sacrificing myself on the altar of justice.

And you, wives and mothers, tell us in your turn of the beauty of these tragic years; wives, whose every thought goes, sad, but resigned, towards the absent one, bringing him your hopes, your long expectation, your prayers. Mothers, whose divided existence is consumed in unceasing anguish, you have given your sons, and you will not take them back; we stand breathless with unceasing admiration before you.

The head of one of our noblest families wrote to me: "Our son in the 7th Line Regiment has fallen; my wife and I are broken-hearted; and yet, if it had to be, we would give him again."

One of the curates of the capital has been condemned to twelve years penal servitude. I was allowed to go into his cell to embrace and to bless him. "I have three brothers at the front," he said, "and I think I am here chiefly because I

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helped the youngest, he is only seventeen—to rejoin the elder ones; one of my sisters is in a neighbouring cell, but, thank God, my mother is not left alone; indeed she has sent us a message to say so; she does not weep.”

Is it not true that our mothers make us think of the mother of the Machabees?

What lessons of moral greatness there are to be learnt here around us, and in exile and in the prisons, and in the concentration camps, in Holland and in Germany!

Do we think enough of what those brave men must be suffering, who since the beginning of the war, on the morrow of the defence of Liège and Namur, and the retreat from Antwerp, saw their military career shattered, and chafe and fret, these guardians of our rights, and of our communal liberties, whose valour has reduced them to inaction?

It needs courage to throw oneself forward, but it needs no less to hold oneself back. Sometimes it is more noble to suffer in silence than to act.

And what of these two years of calm submission by the Belgian people before the inevitable; this unshakeable tenacity, which moved a humble woman, before whom the possibilities of an approaching conclusion of peace were being discussed, to say: “Oh, as for us, we must not worry; we can go on waiting.” How beautiful is

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all this, and how full of instruction for the generations to come.

This is what you must look at, my brothers, the greatness of the nation in her sacrifice; our universal and enduring brotherhood in anguish and in mourning, and in the same unconquerable hope; this is what you must look at to appraise your Belgian fatherland at its true value.

Now the first exponents of this moral greatness are our soldiers.

Until that day when they return to us, and when grateful Belgium acclaims the living, and places a halo of glory about the memory of her dead, let us build up for them in our hearts a permanent monument of sacred gratitude.

Let us pray for those who are no more. Let us exclude no one from our commiseration; the blood of Christ was shed for all. Some of them are atoning in Purgatory for the last remnants of their human weakness. It is for you to hasten their entry into Paradise. Succour the poor in distress, both the poor who are known to you and those who are ashamed to beg. Give of your abundance to those who are in need of the necessities of life. Be present at the Mass, which is celebrated every week in your parish churches for our dead soldiers; take your children with you, encourage them to communicate, and communicate with them.

Let us also pray for those who are still holding

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the firing line on the field of battle. Remember that, even at this moment, while I am speaking to you, some of them are in the agony of death. The prospect of eternity stretches out before them. Let us think of them, let us mortify ourselves for them, resign ourselves to God for them, and obtain for them a holy death.

"Our soldiers are our masters," wrote a French Academician yesterday, "they are our leaders, our teachers, our judges, our supporters, our true friends; let us be worthy of them, let us imitate them, so that we may not do less than our duty; they are always ready to do more than their own."

The hour of deliverance approaches, but it has not yet struck. Let us be patient. Let us not suffer our courage to waver. Let us surrender to Divine Providence the work of making perfect our national probation.

Young women, young girls, let me ask if you are thinking seriously enough about the gravity of this present time? I entreat you not to turn aside from the mourning of your country. There are attitudes, there are ways of behaving which are an insult to grief.

For you modesty is at all times a virtue and a halo of glory; but to-day it is in addition a patriotic duty.

You, also, must think of the privations and of the endurance of our soldiers.

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Let us all try to adopt the great principle of austerity in our lives.

"How much," continues the patriot whom I have just quoted, "how much ought we, in the relatively easy conditions and the less exposed districts, which are ours, and which do not deserve the name of fire zones, to endeavour to reduce and simplify our needs, and like the soldiers, though in our own sphere, to show more concentrated energy. Let us not allow ourselves a moment's distraction or relaxation. Let us devote every minute in our lives to the magnificent cause for which our brothers are so devotedly sacrificing theirs.

"And, just as our heroes at the front show us a wonderful and consoling spectacle of indissoluble unity, of a brotherhood in arms which nothing can destroy, even so, in our ranks, less compact and well-disciplined though they may be, we shall earnestly strive to maintain the same patriotic sense of union. We will respect the truce imposed on our quarrels by the one great Cause which alone ought to use and absorb all our powers of attack and combat; and if there are any godless or unfortunate people, who fail to understand the urgency and the beauty of this national precept, and insist, in spite of all, on keeping alive and fomenting the passions which divide us when other matters are concerned, we will turn aside our

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heads, and continue without answering them, to remain faithful to the pact of fellowship, of friendship, of loyal and true confidence which we have concluded with them, even in spite of themselves, under the great inspiration of the war."

The approaching date of the first centenary of our independence ought to find us stronger, more intrepid, more united than ever. Let us prepare ourselves for it with work, with patience and in true brotherhood.

When, in 1930, we recall the dark years of 1915-1916, they will appear to us as the brightest, the most majestic and, if, from to-day we resolve that they shall be so, the happiest and the most fruitful in our national history. *Per crucem ad lucem*—from the sacrifice flashes forth the light!

IX.

The Voice of God

THE MONTH OF THE HOLY ROSARY, 1916.

INTRODUCTION.

Our Trial is Long.

Yes indeed, our trial is very long. Day after day I hear you repeating this, and there is nobody, I think, who does not feel as you do.

And when will this trial of ours come to an end?

One day, when our divine Saviour had talked with His apostles of the scourges that must come immediately before the end of the world—wars, pestilences, famines, earthquakes, disturbances of the air—His hearers asked Him: "When will these things be?"¹

And our divine Saviour answered: "No man knoweth, not even the Son of Man."² In other words, it is not part of the mission of the Son of God to reveal the time to humanity. What chiefly concerns you indeed is not to know that the world will last another thousand years, or ten thousand

¹ Matt. xxiv. 3.

² Mark xiii. 32.

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years, or ten million years ; nor whether you will die in youth, in middle age, or in extreme old age. One thing only concerns you—that you save your souls, and become, in the all-powerful hands of the Master of all that happens, docile instruments for the sanctification of His Holy Name, for the establishment of His reign, and for the fulfilment of His will.

FIRST PART.

To be filled with the deeper meaning of events, the soul must remain silent, in face of eternity.

God speaks to us both from without and from within.

From without, He speaks to us in the wonders of nature and in the lessons taught by events.

From within, He speaks to us in the gentle breath of the grace of the Holy Spirit.

The voice of nature is generally harmonious and calm, like the solemn march of the sun through space, like the murmur of the waters, the growth of corn, the slow evolution of the seasons. But it is sometimes violent and terrible, like the voice of the thunder and lightning, or the upheaval of tempests, or the shocks that make the earth tremble and pour the volcanic lava upon it.

The world of human history, too, has its passages of peace, its periods of concentrated work, its economic, intellectual, artistic and generally

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civilising successes. But then again, at certain times, passions are unloosed, hate stifles the very voice of love, and death seems for a while to triumph over life.

And yet, God speaks to us all the time.

Every historical period is a page in the divine book of Providence.

We write that page ; but the strong yet gentle Will of the Almighty holds the instrument with which we write.

It is for us to choose whether we write in letters of gold, or characters of blood ; but the book must be written all the same. We shall once more find this book in eternity, and then it will appear to all how and in what measure each of us shall have collaborated in composing it.

So long as history runs its course, the book is shut and sealed. The divine Lamb, Who has shed His blood for our redemption, alone has the Power to break the seven seals guarding its secrets. The elders of the Apocalypse, bowed down before the Lamb, offer Him the prayers of the saints and sing : "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to take the book and to open the seals thereof : because Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God, in Thy blood. Thou hast gained for the service of God the representatives of all nations, without distinct of race, without political or geographical classification. Thou hast made us members of a

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spiritual Kingdom to the glory of our God and transformed our life into a priestly office. *Dignus es, Domine, accipere librum, et aperire signacula ejus: quoniam occisus es, et redemisti nos Deo in sanguine tuo ex omni tribu, et lingua et populo, et natione: et fecisti nos Deo nostro regnum, et sacerdotes.*"

The last seal will be broken when the divine Jesus who condescended to lower Himself unto us and to take our feeble nature upon Him, in order to sacrifice it for our sakes, shall return to us in the Majesty of His glory, seated upon the clouds, the Cross of the last judgment in His hand, and in His voice, a thousand times more powerful than thunder, shall say to every living creature one or other of these two things: "Come, ye blessed of My Father take your place in the heavenly kingdom I have prepared for you"; or else: "Depart from Me, ye accursed, into the fire eternal created for the Devil and for those who have made themselves his servants."

This will be the last resounding word that shall fall from the lips of the Man-God—decisive irrevocable word that shall group us for all eternity, on the right or on the left, amongst the elect in glory, or amongst the accursed in Hell.

Dearly beloved Brethren, do you give thought to this? Do you give enough thought to it?

In face of this supreme choice, what does all else matter?

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What matters it that you die young or old, in bed or on the field of battle, far away from your own people or near them—what does it matter?

In the last resort, what difference can it make to you whether your days pass peacefully in a well-loved home where comfort and plenty are, and where you are surrounded by friendship and esteem; or whether you have passed your life in trials, in loneliness, in narrow means, perhaps, or burdened by fears, humiliations, and oppression? With what feelings will you consider and judge these trifles, as you view them from eternity?

Whatever may happen to you, there is in you something that no man and no event can touch—your soul; and this soul which belongs to you, which is yours, of which you are the master, is made to enjoy God, and will enjoy God if you will only have it so. It will embrace Him and be embraced by Him in turn, not indeed in the brief course of the life of a man, not within any period of history, but eternally, for ever, for evermore.

My Brethren, do but look up, I beseech you, and keep your eyes fixed upon this polar star of your eternity.

And you will see created circumstance sinking into the half-light of things of nothing that pass away, and that are called in the Scriptures (that other direct and personal voice of God) now smoke that glides and disappears, now a cloud that dis-

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solves, now a shadow that vanishes, now a flower that fades, now a wave lost in the ocean whence it rose.

Eternity!

My Brethren, all of us lack courage to look it, even once, full in the face. Embrace it as closely as you can; fix it but for an hour, for half an hour, for a quarter of an hour, in your imagination; let your thoughts cleave to it, and, during that quarter of an hour, determine to see nought but that; and, in that, God, God-made man, your Creator, your Saviour, your Judge; with yourselves, in face of it, made for it. Determine, for that brief while, to forget all that is not eternity. You will rise again, enlightened, tempered like steel, with minds made up and resolution firm.

My Brethren, I said at the beginning of this talk with you that God speaks to us from without and from within—without, in the voice of nature or history; within, in the gentle breath of the grace of the Holy Spirit.

Would you know why eternity, which matters so much, touches you so little; while events that time carries away with it haunt you so vividly?

It is because you who have leisure for all things will not give yourselves time for the only thing that is worth while. You have not the gift of concentration and of listening in silence. Your soul was made the dwelling place of the Holy

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Spirit, in baptism and confirmation: let it be drenched (says St. John) in the oil of grace, and it will learn to distinguish truth from falsehood. But (observes Pope St. Gregory) grace resembles the morning breeze: it kisses the cheek and passes on. The unquiet cannot keep it near them.

You are at the mercy of events, instead of being their masters. You obey your emotions, though it is your duty, as it is in your power, to control them. Bid them be silent. Go down upon your knees in your own chamber, with doors close shut—*clauso ostio*—or in the sanctuary where Our divine Saviour resides for us, before the tabernacle, before the crucifix, and there in silence, tearing yourself from all that is going on without and all that is troubling within, ask Our Lord to send you His Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the first finger of the Father's right hand, *digitus Paternæ dexteræ*, and it will show you the way along which your conscience must find, in every hour of your grief or fear, only truth, light and peace.

SECOND PART.

Our Lord Jesus Christ gives us the key to all that happens, in the mystery of His Death and Resurrection, perpetuated in the holy sacrifice of the Mass. Thus, out of death, arises life.

Wars ought not to trouble the peace of the human race. In the original plan of Providence,

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our passions were controlled by reason and they ought never to have formed an obstacle to the agreement either of families or of nations. But sin has upset this generous design; and in the train of sin, disorder invaded history. Henceforward, rebellion is inevitably a portion of circumstances. Pride and greed destroy the just balance of things; so that repression and armed defence are necessary for its restoration. Hence wars have become inevitable, and so long as there are men upon earth guilty of allowing passion to gain the upper hand of reason in them, or of letting reason come before the divine will, so long will universal peace prove a chimera only. More; to desire peace for the sake of peace, peace at any price, would be to accept, with absolute indifference, either right or injustice, truth or lies. It would be an act of cowardice and of impiety.

And yet a great artist knows how to force discord into harmony. The ugly become, in contrast, a finer sort of beauty under the brush of a painter of genius.

So with divine Providence—it willed the good only, but finds, in the secrets of its infinite wisdom, the means of transforming this world, troubled and made ugly by the sins of our first parents and by our own crimes, into a work of redemption that surpasses the design of its first intention in grandeur and moral perfection. “God who is

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all-powerful and supremely good would not permit the least evil to steal into His work (says St. Augustine) if He were not powerful and good enough to make good come out of evil itself. *Neque Deus omnipotens, rerum cui summa potestas, cum summe bonus sit, ullo modo sineret mali aliquid esse in operibus suis, nisi usque adeo esset omnipotens et bonus, ut bene faceret et de malo."*

And you remember, my Brethren, that every year on Holy Saturday, at the commencement of the resurrection of Christ, the Church is bold enough to sing: "O, needful indeed was this, the sin of Adam, which the death of Christ has washed away. O, happy the fault which has given us so powerful a Redeemer! *O certe necessarium Adamæ peccatum, quod Christi morte deletum est. O felix culpa, quæ talem ac tantum meruit habere Redemptorem."*

The grim events we have witnessed in the last two years are the result of human passions which we must deplore and execrate; but it is for us to raise ourselves, by reflexion and faith, to a higher and calmer conception of the whole plan of Providence, and to apply to our affliction and to the crimes that have occasioned it, what the liturgy says of the drama that was at once the blackest of crimes and cruellest of sufferings: "Lord (it says in the canon of the Mass) in memory of the happy

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passion of the Christ, your Son, our Lord, and of His resurrection and glorious ascension, we offer to Your Sovereign Majesty this holy Victim, this life-giving bread and this cup of immortality."

Yes, in spite of its horrors, the Passion of our divine Saviour was happy indeed. Happy for Him, since it brought about His glorious resurrection, His ascension, and His rule over the world. Happy for us, since henceforward if we agree to suffer with Him, with Him too shall we be glorified, *si tamen compatimur, ut et conglorificemur*.

"A moment of affliction now"—thus speaks St. Paul to the Corinthians—"then above, for the eternal reward, an overflowing weight of glory: provided that we do not fix our gaze on things visible, but on things invisible, for what is visible passes away, what we see not is eternal. *Id enim quod in præsentī est momentaneum et leve tribulationis nostræ, supra modum in sublimitate æternæ gloriæ pondus operatur in nobis, non contemplantibus nobis quæ videntur sed quæ non videntur. Quæ enim videntur temporalia sunt; quæ autem non videntur, æterna sunt.*"

Such, briefly summarised, my Brethren, is the fundamental solution of the essential problems in the life of individuals and of nations. The Passion comes before the Resurrection; death must be in order that we may live; the cross must exist in order that we may enter into glory.

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Under the old Covenant, God spake to His chosen people through the medium of His prophets. Under the new Covenant, says St. Paul, He speaks to us directly through His Son, Who, having purified us with His blood, has taken His place, eternal King of the ages, on the right hand of the Majesty of His Father.

It was the mission of the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Nahum, Habakkuk, and the others, to recall the chosen people and their oppressors, the Egyptians, the Assyrians, the Chaldæans, and the Babylonians, to a sense of the law of duty; and the prophets always proclaimed to them that they would find in ruins and in bloodshed at once their punishment and the principle of their regeneration. God chastises only to heal and to save. Guilty humanity needs to die in order to live again. So long as the grain of corn dies not in the earth, there can be no hope of life and fruitfulness. "Follow this hint (says the Apostle St. Paul again), expect solely from the cross your regeneration in Christ Jesus, and there you will find pardon and peace for you and for all the children of the true people of Israel. *Mihi autem absit gloriari, nisi in cruce Domini nostri Jesu Christi. . . . In Christo enim Jesu, nihil valet (nisi) nova creatura. Et quicumque hac regulam secuti fuerint, pax super illos, et misericordia, et super Israël Dei.*"

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Just in proportion as the Belgian people succeed in thoroughly grasping these stern lessons, it will use the two tragic years it has just passed as a hopeful starting-point towards a more vigorous future, towards a renewal of energy, and a more ardent confidence in the unlimited resources of a Christian nation.

In that most sacred moment of the Mass when the priest and the faithful are about to partake of the Christ, what prayers does the Church put upon our lips? Once more, she recalls to us the starting-point and the term of mortal life. Now, she says, the eternal Father with the help of the Holy Spirit realises His plans of making the source of life that must nourish the world arise from the death of Our Saviour Jesus Christ, Son of the living God. *Domine Jesu Christe, Fili Dei vivi, qui ex voluntate Patris, cooperante Spiritu Sancto, per mortem tuam, mundum vivificasti.*

And do not the Holy Popes Pius IX. and Pius X. urge us to say this morning prayer every day after Mass: "I beseech Thee, my most gentle Lord Jesus Christ, that Thy death be unto me a source of never-failing life, and that Thy Cross be unto me a glory everlasting. *Mors tua sit mihi vita indeficiens, Crux tua sit mihi gloria sempiterna.*"

Come to Mass, my Brethren, in order that you may renew your religious life. Come every day,

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if you can ; but at least never miss the obligatory Mass on Sundays.

Quite recently I have come across young people—girls of the working classes—who no longer dare to show themselves in church, because they have only clogs to wear there. My children, I understand and sympathise with your humiliation. But be sure that our divine Saviour is in no way like the pretentious people whose gaze you fear to face. He took poverty willingly upon Himself, that He might better draw you unto Him. The nearer your condition is to destitution, the more you resemble Him, and the more He cares for you.

Oh, my Brethren, always honour the poor ! And you, my dear colleagues in the priesthood, give them the first place in your regard and in your care. I should like to see them in the first rank in the temple of Jesus of Bethlehem and of Nazareth. Before God and before the Church, they are greater and are worth more than you or we. If they gladly accept their condition—accept it with faith—they do more for the salvation of humanity, than those who sometimes dazzle you with their riches and success.

As for you, Ladies, were you to make a show of abundance, at a time when your sisters have only clogs and threadbare garments, be sure that you would offend God, your country, and the dignity of the poor.

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Come then all of you, men and women, to Mass. Come dressed quietly : do not be ashamed to come in clothes that are clean, if very poor.

Come chiefly with your minds upon the first intention of the sacrificial service, which is to worship God. To worship God is to proclaim that God is God ; that He is the Master to whom you owe obedience ; that all He does is well done. Associate yourselves with the priest at the altar, not only in the recital of prayers more or less similar to his, but by the exercise of the sacerdotal function with him. For you, too, are priests. You have heard the Apostle St. John telling you in the Apocalypse, that the blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ has made kings and priests of you all—priests of God and of Christ, he says elsewhere. And St. Peter expresses himself in the same way : “ Christ,” he says, “ is the living stone on which all the Church is built ; as for you, you are the living stones raised upon Him, to form a spiritual family, a consecrated race, whose mission it must be to offer up spiritual sacrifices that please God. *Et ipsi tanquam lapides vivi superædificamini, domus spiritualis, in sacerdotium sanctum, offerre spirituales hostias, acceptabiles Deo per Jesum Christum.*”

The Bishop conveys this admonition to the priest charged officially with the public ministry in Church : “ Understand what you are about ; be

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inspired, in all your actions, by the Mystery that you touch with your hands; and since you renew at the altar the mystery of the Death of Our Lord, realise in your members also the death sentence of all vicious instincts and evil desires within you. *Agnoscite quod agis; imitamini quod tractatis; quatenus mortis Dominicæ mysterium celebrantes, mortificare membra vestra a vitiis et concupiscentiis omnibus procuretis.*"

And since you are priests—that is offerers of sacrifice—be victims also in your turn. "My Brethren," writes St. Paul to the Romans, "I beseech by the divine mercy, to offer the life of your bodies as a pure and living sacrifice acceptable unto God. Let that be the spiritual form of your worship.. *Obsecro itaque vos fratres, per misericordiam Dei, ut exhibeatis corpora vestra hostiam viventem, sanctam, Deo placentem, rationabile obsequium vestrum.*"

Make the substance of your sacrifice out of your personal sufferings and our national sufferings, as well as out of all the actions of your lives.

But even this is not enough. You must immolate your life itself, in anticipation, and by an act of will, to the honour of God. Death is not only a violent breaking-up of our existence, to which we are forced by our fate to submit. It is an act also, to which the soul of the Christian must need assent. It is the giving back to the sovereign

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Master of a possession He has granted us for His glory. This giving back is a priestly act, accomplished by the Christian in unison with the last expiring breath of our Christ Jesus. And when all of us familiarise ourselves with this ennobling Christian conception of death, and make together with those sons and brothers of ours who fall upon the field of battle, the inner sacrifice of our earthly life, there will arise from the soil of our Belgian land towards the throne of God's Majesty, a magnificent act of adoration which will descend again upon us in benediction from God.

Our sacrifice will be an act of worship and of expiation. During these two months of the Holy Rosary and of the Dead, in unison with the sorrowful and immaculate heart of Mary, be constant in your presence upon Calvary, be constant in your attendance at the holy Sacrifice of Mass; ask pardon for the living; ask pity for the souls of our beloved dead.

Let us also be thankful to God. Let us bless Him in that He has preserved our King, the glory of the Belgian nation, to our love; our kind and brave Queen also, and the children of the royal family. Let us give thanks to Him for having given us the patience to endure our long and weary trial without weakness or complaining; for having granted us the first blessing of Our Holy Father the Pope, Benedict XV, and for having inspired

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him to assure us that his warmest fatherly affection is for Belgium ; and for having filled the hearts of all foreign nations with the respect due to our misfortunes. After the war, we shall have to raise a monument of our gratitude to them. From to-day let us give them a place of honour in our pious gratitude.

Finally, so long as we are not at the end of our Calvary, let our attendance at Mass be a devoted prayer for our dear country, for those present and those absent, for our brave prisoners and our interned, and for our dear refugees in other lands.

The longer the war lasts, the more ardent does my commiseration grow for all those energetic men who longed to expend their strength on our behalf and who suffer tortures to-day from the inaction forced upon them.

Those refugees of ours ! Certainly England, France, Holland and Switzerland omit nothing that could soften their lot. But exile is always exile. Sometimes one hears that bitter things are said of them. I do not assert that there have not been amongst them certain weaknesses which those responsible for them perhaps sorrowfully regret to-day. And yet how many of those whom you carelessly criticise have acted regretfully, but in unwilling response to some modest feeling of respect for others, or moved by some affection of son or father, some sense of devotion to one sick,

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some anxious care for a son at the front, or else under pressure of material need. According to the testimony of all who have watched them closely, our absent friends show the same patience, abnegation, and apostolic spirit, as their fellow countrymen in Belgium under occupation. We shall welcome them back with open arms when they return to us. Let them not doubt that they will find here friends and brothers who have remained invariably faithful to them.

We cannot exclude anyone—not even our enemies—from our prayers; but Christian theology teaches us to graduate our affections. Love your neighbours, your fellow-countrymen, and those who do good to you, with special predilection, says St. Thomas. Let us pray, then, above all, for our dear soldiers, who are bound so closely to our affections by the ties of blood, perhaps, or by patriotism and their devotion to us. Let us not separate from them, their wives and mothers, those silent heroines of the great European drama. Pray for our armies who in the West, in the East and in the South, fight with so much valiance and tenacity, for our common cause. May their guardian angels be with them in action, and keep them religious and chaste in hours of repose. Let us specially commend to you also our priests, whether military chaplains or stretcher-bearers. May their ministry prove faithful, and may they

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pass through all dangers, without stain, and return to us pious and strong.

Suffering has made us more inclined to pity. Formerly we allowed the massacres of the poor Armenian people to pass by without any great emotion. In the course of the present war the fanaticism of the Musulman has caused thousands and thousands of these unfortunate people to be put to death, and has carried their women and girls away into slavery. Take pity upon them; pray for them.

Poland, noble Poland, ever faithful to her faith and to her word, Poland that has never undertaken a war of conquest, but has struggled always for the liberty of peoples and for European civilisation—Poland suffers even more than we do. Her sons are scattered in the Russian, Austrian and German battalions. Her soil has been ploughed and ravaged by the flux and reflux of armies. America cannot see to *her* provisionment. Pray for her, my Brothers, and ask of God that one at least of the happy results of this horrible war may be the final recognition of the independence of Poland.

And lastly, here too, in occupied Belgium, let us pray one for another, and let us love one another. Let our affection be both active and sincere. The story of Belgian charity during the war will provide pages that deserve to figure beside those

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which shall tell of the heroism of the soldiers. Let there be no stain upon our national record. Let us all collaborate, as best we can, in our union and in aid of one another. Let those who are well off give freely to those in need, to the sick, and to the feeble. Beware of getting rich—that would be odious—at the expense of the poverty of others.

And to the end let all of us remain patient and persevering. Lift up your hearts! Strengthen your hopes. Let us cry unto God with the Holy Liturgy: "O God come to my help; Lord, hasten to succour me. *Deus, in adjutorium meum intende. Domine ad adjuvandum me festina.*" Meanwhile, calm, courage, and no murmuring. Let us apply to our patriotic endurance what our divine Saviour has said of the work of our eternal salvation. "He that shall persevere unto the end, he shall be saved. *Qui perseveraverit usque in finem hic salvus erit.*"

Receive, my dearly beloved Brethren, each and all of you, Belgians in occupied Belgium, and absent fellow-countrymen, my episcopal and fatherly blessing.

† D. J. CARD. MERCIER,
Archbishop of Malines.

X.

Protests against the Deportation of Belgians into Germany

(1) First Letter to Baron von Bissing.

19 October, 1916.

TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL.

Sir,

Immediately after the fall of Antwerp, the terrified people were eager to know what would be the fate of Belgians already of military age, as well as of those who would reach that age before the German occupation came to an end. I was induced by the entreaties of many fathers and mothers to put the question to the Governor of Antwerp, Baron von Huene, who was good enough to re-assure me, and who authorised me to give, in his name, a similar assurance to the sorely anxious parents concerned.

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Meanwhile, rumours had reached Antwerp that at Liège, Namur, and Charleroi, young men had been arrested and carried by force into Germany. I therefore requested the Governor, M. von Huene, to be so kind as to confirm in writing the guarantee, already given me verbally, that nothing of this kind should take place in Antwerp itself. He immediately replied that the rumours regarding the deportations were unfounded, and without hesitation forwarded to me the following amongst other written declarations: "Young men need have no fear that they will be taken away into Germany, either to be enrolled in the army there, or to be employed on forced labour of any kind."

This declaration, written and signed, was publicly communicated to the clergy and faithful of the province of Antwerp, as your Excellency can ascertain from the enclosed document (dated 16th October, 1914) which was read aloud in all the churches of the province.

On the arrival of your predecessor, the late Baron von der Goltz, in Brussels, I had the honour of an interview with him, and I asked him to ratify, for the whole country and without time-limit, the guarantees given me by General von Huene for the province of Antwerp alone. The Governor-General kept my petition by him, in order to examine it at leisure. The next day he was good enough to come in person to Malines and to give

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me his full approval ; while in the presence of two aides-de-camp and of my own private secretary, he confirmed the former promise that the liberty of private citizens in Belgium would be respected. To feel any doubt about the authority of such solemn pledges would have been an insult to those who had given them, and I therefore used every means of persuasion in my power to calm the persistent anxieties of the families directly involved.

Yet, now, your Government is actually engaged in hurrying from their homes, in violently separating from their wives and children, and in carrying away into the enemy country, men who are out of work through no fault of their own. Numbers of them have already suffered this unhappy fate : greater numbers still are threatened with similar violence.

In the name of the Belgian citizen's right to choose his residence and work ; in the name of the inviolability of family life ; in the name of those moral interests so gravely compromised by the practice of deportation ; in the name, too, of the undertaking given by the Governor of the province of Antwerp and by the Governor-General himself, who directly represent the highest authority in the German Empire, I respectfully beg you to withdraw the orders regarding forced labour and deportation issued to the working men of Belgium,

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and also to send back to their homes such of them as have already been carried away in this manner. Your Excellency will easily understand how heavy would be the weight of my responsibility towards the families of these men, if the faith they placed in you, on account of my intervention and my urgent representations to them, were now to be so lamentably betrayed.

I remain, Sir,

Very respectfully yours,

(Signed) D. J. CARD. MERCIER,
Archbishop of Malines.

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(2) Letter to Baron von der Lancken, Chief of the Political Government at Brussels.

MALINES, 19 October, 1916.

MONSIEUR LE BARON,

I have the honour of sending to His Excellency, Baron von Bissing, a letter of which I now enclose a copy.

The Governor-General has so often expressed, sometimes even publicly, his willingness to devote much anxious attention to the interests of the country under occupation, and you too, sir, have so often proclaimed the intention of the German authorities not to carry the war conditions of early days into the period of occupation, that I cannot believe that the measures with which your Government threatens working men, thrown out of employment through no fault of their own, will really be put into execution.

I earnestly hope that you will use all your influence with those in authority to prevent such an outrage.

Do not speak, I entreat you, of the need for safeguarding public order, or of the necessity of lightening the burden upon public charity. Spare

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us such bitter irony. You know well that public order is in no way threatened and that all our moral and civilian influences would be placed spontaneously at your disposal, if there were any danger of the kind. The unemployed are not a charge upon official relief; and no help comes to them from any financial arrangements which you may make.

I must leave you to judge if it be not in the interests of Germany, as well as of ourselves, that pledges given by two highly-placed officials of your Empire should be respected.

I am confident that my efforts to convince the Governor-General and yourself will not be misinterpreted or misunderstood.

I remain,

Very respectfully yours,

(Signed) D. J. CARD. MERCIER,

Archbishop of Malines.

To Baron von der Lancken,

Chief of the Political Department under the Governor-General, Brussels.

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(3) An Appeal to Neutrals

MECHLIN, 7 November, 1916.

Every day the military authorities deport thousands of inoffensive citizens from Belgium to Germany, and there condemn them to forced labour.

As early as the 19th of October, we addressed a protest to the Governor-General, a copy of which was handed to the representatives of the Holy See, Spain, the United States, and Holland, in Brussels; the Governor-General, however, replied with a refusal to entertain our cause.

At the date of our protest, the decrees of the occupying Power threatened only the unemployed; but at present, all able-bodied men are being carried off indiscriminately, packed into open trucks, and sent away, we know not where, like a gang of slaves.

The enemy is taking the districts in turn. We had heard vague rumours of arrests having been made in the zone of the Depôts, at Tournai, at Ghent, and at Alost, but we did not know under what conditions. Between October 24 and November 2 raids were carried out in the district of Mons, Quiévrain, Saint Ghislain and Jemappes, from 800 to 1,200 men a day being seized. To-

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morrow, and on succeeding days, the blow is to fall upon the district of Nivelles. The following is a sample of the proclamations posted to announce the outrage :—

“By order of the Kreischef, all persons of the male sex over 17 years of age are called upon to present themselves at the Place Saint Paul, at Nivelles, on November 8, 1916, at 8 o'clock (Belgian time), 9 o'clock (German time), bringing their identity cards, and, in case of necessity, their cards from the Meldeamt.

“The only luggage allowed will be small hand-baggage. Any person who fails to present himself will be forcibly deported to Germany, and will further be liable to a heavy fine and a long term of imprisonment.

“Priests, doctors, lawyers and schoolmasters are not to present themselves.

“Burgomasters will be held responsible for due execution of this order, which must be immediately brought to the knowledge of the inhabitants.”

An interval of 24 hours is allowed to elapse between the posting of the placard and deportation.

Under the pretext of public works to be carried out on Belgian soil, the occupying Power had made an attempt to obtain from the Communes lists of

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unemployed workmen. The majority of the Communes proudly refused to furnish these.

Three Orders of the Governor-General's were designed to make ready for the blow that falls upon us to-day.

On August 15, 1915, a first Order imposed forced labour on the unemployed, under penalty of imprisonment and fine ; but it declared that the labour in question was only to be applied to works on Belgian soil, and that any infringement would be tried in the Belgian Courts.

A second Order, dated May 2, 1916, reserves to the German authorities the right of giving work to the unemployed, and threatens any person causing work to be executed without the sanction of the Governor-General, with three years' imprisonment and a fine of 20,000 marks.

By virtue of this same Order, the jurisdiction which had been conceded to the Belgian Courts passes into the hands of the German authorities. A third Order, dated May 13, 1916, "authorises Governors, military commandants, and heads of districts to order the unemployed to be removed by force to the places where they are to work." Thus forced labour was already introduced, but it was in Belgium.

To-day, it is no longer a question of forced labour in Belgium, but in Germany, and for the benefit of the Germans.

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To give an appearance of plausibility to these violent measures, the occupying Power insisted in the German press, both in Germany and Belgium, on these two pretexts: The unemployed constitute a danger to public order, and a burden on official benevolence.

The letter we addressed to the Governor-General and to the head of his political department on October 16, replied to this as follows:—

“You are well aware that public order is in no wise threatened, and that all influences, moral and civil, would support you spontaneously were it in danger. The unemployed are not a burden on official benevolence; it is not from your funds that they receive assistance.”

In his reply, the Governor-General no longer urges these two considerations, but he alleges that doles to the unemployed, from wherever they may come at present, must finally be a charge upon our finances, and that it is the **duty** of a good administrator to lighten such charges; he adds “that prolonged unemployment would cause our workmen to lose their technical proficiency, and that, in the time of peace to come, they would be useless to industry.”

True, there were other ways in which our finances might have been protected. We might have been spared those war-levies which have now reached the sum of a thousand million francs, and

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are still mounting up at the rate of forty millions a month; we might have been spared those requisitions in kind which represent several thousands of millions, and are exhausting us.

There were other ways of providing for the maintenance of professional skill among our work people, such as leaving to Belgian industry its machinery and accessories, its raw materials and its manufactured goods, which have passed from Belgium into Germany. And it is not to the quarries and lime-kilns to which the Germans themselves declare they will send our unemployed, that our specialists would think of going to complete their professional education.

The naked truth is that every deported workman is another soldier for the German army. He will take the place of a German workman who will be made into a soldier. Thus the situation which we denounce to the civilised world may be reduced to these terms: Four hundred thousand workmen have been thrown out of work by no fault of their own, and largely on account of the *régime* of the occupation. Sons, husbands, and fathers of families, they bear their unhappy lot without murmuring, respectful of public order; national solidarity provides for their most pressing wants; by dint of a generous parsimony and self-denial, they escape extreme destitution, and they await with dignity, and in a mutual affection which our

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national mourning intensifies, the end of our common ordeal.

Bands of soldiers break into their peaceful homes, snatch youth from their parents, the husband from his wife, the father from his children, guard with fixed bayonets the doors through which wives and mothers attempt to pass to bid a last farewell to those who are leaving them; marshal their captives in groups of forty or fifty, and hoist them forcibly into open trucks; the engine stands ready under full steam; as soon as the train is full a superior officer gives the signal for departure. Here we have another thousand Belgians reduced to slavery; condemned, without previous trial, to the severest penalty in the penal code save the death-penalty—deportation. They know not where they are going, nor for how long. All they know is that their work will benefit no one but their enemies. From some of them, by bribes or threats, an engagement has been extorted which is shamelessly called “voluntary.”

Moreover, though the unemployed are certainly enrolled, a very large number of those recruited—one-fourth in the district of Mons—are men who have never been out of work, men of a great variety of callings: butchers, bakers, master-tailors, brewers’ assistants, electricians and agriculturists; even quite young lads have been taken, students at university colleges or other higher schools.

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And yet two high authorities of the German Empire formally guaranteed the liberty of our compatriots to us. After the capitulation of Antwerp, the distracted population was asking what would happen to Belgians of military age, or such as would reach that age before the occupation had ended. Baron von Heune, the military Governor of Antwerp, authorised me to reassure the distressed parents in his name. However, as there were rumours in Antwerp that at Liège, Namur, and Charleroi, youths had been seized and forcibly carried off to Germany, I begged Governor von Heune to be so good as to confirm in writing the oral assurances he had given me. He replied that the rumours of deportations were baseless, and gave me, without hesitation, the following written declaration, which was read aloud on Sunday, October 18, 1914, in all the parish churches of the province of Antwerp: "Young men need have no fear of being carried off to Germany, either to be enrolled in the army, or to be subjected to forced labour."

Immediately after the arrival of Baron von der Goltz in the capacity of Governor-General at Brussels, I went to ask him to ratify the guarantees given by Governor von Heune to the Province of Antwerp, extending them to the whole country, without any time limit. The Governor-General retained my petition, in order to consider it at

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his leisure. The following day he was good enough to come in person to Mechlin to express his approval, and, in the presence of two aides-de-camp and of my private secretary, to confirm the promise that the liberty of Belgian citizens would be respected.

In my letter of October 16 last to Baron von Bissing, after reminding him of the undertaking given by his predecessor, I concluded: "Your Excellency will understand how painful the burden of responsibility I should have incurred towards families would be, if the confidence they placed in you through me and at my earnest entreaty should be so lamentably disappointed."

The Governor-General replied: "The employment of the Belgian unemployed in Germany, which has only been initiated after two years of war, differs essentially from the captivity of men fit for military service. Moreover, the measure is not related to the conduct of war properly speaking, but is determined by social and economic causes."

As if the word of an honest man could be cancelled at the end of a year or two years like an officer's lease!

As if the declaration confirmed in 1914 did not explicitly exclude both military operations and forced labour!

Finally, as if every Belgian workman who takes

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the place of a German workman did not enable the latter to fill a gap in the German army!

We, the shepherds of these sheep who are torn from us by brutal force, full of anguish at the thought of the moral and religious isolation in which they are about to languish, impotent witnesses of the grief and terror in the numerous homes shattered or threatened, turn to souls, believing or unbelieving, in Allied countries, in neutral countries, and even in enemy countries, who have a respect for human dignity.

When Cardinal Lavigerie embarked on his anti-slavery campaign, Pope Leo XIII., as he blessed his mission, said: "Opinion is more than ever the queen of the world; it is on this you must work. You will only conquer by means of opinion."

May divine Providence deign to inspire all who have any authority, all who are masters of speech and pen, to rally round our humble Belgian flag for the abolition of European slavery!

May human conscience triumph over all sophisms, and remain steadfastly faithful to the great precept of Saint Ambrose: Honour above everything! *Nihil præferendum honestati!*

In the name of the Belgian Bishops.¹

(Signed) D. J. CARD. MERCIER,
Archbishop of Mechlin.

¹We have been unable to communicate with the Bishop of Bruges.

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(4) Second Letter to Baron von Bissing

MALINES, 10 November, 1916.

TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL,

Sir,

I refrain from expressing to Your Excellency the feelings inspired in me by your letter in answer to the one that I had the honour of addressing to you, on the 19th October, on the subject of the deportation of the "out-of-works."

I sorrowfully called to mind the words Your Excellency spoke, with peculiar emphasis, in my presence, at the time of your arrival in Brussels: "I hope that our relations will be open and frank . . . It is my mission to staunch the wounds of Belgium."

My letter of the nineteenth of October reminded Your Excellency of the pledge given us by Baron von Heune, the military Governor of Antwerp, and ratified, a few days later, by Baron von der Goltz, your predecessor in the Governor-Generalship of Brussels. This pledge was explicit, absolute, and without limit of time: "Young men need have no fear of being taken away into Germany, either to be enrolled in the army, or to be employed there on forced labour of any kind."

This pledge has been violated every day, in thousands of cases, for the last fortnight.

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Baron von Heune and the late Baron von der Goltz did not say, conditionally, as your telegram of the 26th October seeks to imply: "If the occupation does not last more than two years, men of military age will not be sent into captivity." They say categorically: "Young men, still less men of middle age, will not be either imprisoned or employed in forced labour at any moment during the time the occupation may last."

In order to justify your action, Your Excellency cites the conduct of England and France, who have, you say, taken all Germans between the ages of 17 to 50 off neutral boats, in order to intern them in concentration camps.

If England and France had been guilty of an injustice, it would be your duty to revenge yourself upon the English and the French, and not upon a harmless and unarmed people. But has there been any injustice? We are ill-informed as to all that is happening beyond the walls of our prison, but I am much tempted to believe that those Germans who have been arrested and interned belong to the reserve of the Imperial Army. They were therefore soldiers, and England and France had a right to send them into concentration camps.

Belgium, for her part, only inaugurated general personal service in the month of August, 1913.

It follows that Belgians, between the ages of

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17 and 50, resident in occupied Belgium, are civilians, and non-combatants. It is mere juggling with words, then, to assimilate them to German reservists by applying the ambiguous term of "Men fit for military service" to them.

The various orders, proclamations, and comments in the press, designed to prepare public opinion for the measures now being put into practice, relied principally upon two conditions—it was alleged that those out-of-work are a danger to public order; and that they are a burden upon official charity.

My letter of the 19th October has already pointed out that it is not true that our working men have anywhere troubled, or even threatened, outward order. Five millions of Belgians and hundreds of Americans have watched with astonishment the dignity and irreproachable patience of our working class. It is not true that workmen who are without work are a burden upon the power in occupation, or upon the charity administered by it. The National Committee, in which the occupying authority takes no active part, is solely responsible for the subsistence of the victims of forced unemployment.

Those two answers of mine remained without further reply.

The letter of the 26th October tries to justify these proceedings in another way. It alleges that

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the measures affecting those out of work have their motive in "social and economic causes."

It is because the German Government has the interests of the Belgian nation more nearly at heart, and grasps them with greater intelligence than we, that it is now rescuing the working-man from his idleness and preventing him from losing his technical skill.

Forced labour is a set-off against the economic advantages procured for us by our commercial relations with the empire.

For the rest, if any Belgian has to complain of this state of things, let him address his grievances to England. She is the great culprit. It is she who has created this condition of constraint, by means of her policy of isolation.

It will be enough to set a few frank, brief statements against this plea—embarrassed and complicated in the original.

Every Belgian workman will necessarily set free a German workman who will provide one more soldier for the German army. That, in all its simplicity, is the fact that rules the situation. The author of the letter is himself conscious of this painfully obvious fact, since he writes: "Neither has the measure any connexion with the conduct of the war *properly* so called." It must therefore have a connexion with the war *improperly* so called; and what is that but saying that the

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Belgian workman does not take up arms, but frees the hands of the German workman who will do so? The Belgian workman is forced thus to take part, in indirect but obvious fashion, in the war against his own country. That is in manifest contradiction with the spirit of the Hague Convention.

Here is another statement: The lack of employment has nothing to do, either with the Belgian working-man or with England. It is the effect of the order of things dependent upon the German occupation.

The occupying authority has effected a seizure of considerable quantities of raw materials designed for our national industry; it has taken possession of and sent into Germany the machines, tools and metals belonging to our factories and workshops. Since the power to work at home was thus denied him, our working-man had but one alternative: to work for the German Empire, here, or in Germany; or to remain without work. Under the pressure of fear or hunger, several tens of thousands of workmen—regretfully for the most part—accepted work from the foreigner, but four hundred thousand working men and women chose rather to resign themselves to unemployment, with all its privations, than do any disservice to the interests of their own country. They lived in poverty, aided by the slender dole allotted to them by the National Committee of Assistance and

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Food Supply controlled by the protection of the ministers of Spain, America, and Holland. They uncomplainingly endured their unhappy lot with dignity and calm. Nowhere was there any rebellion or appearance of rebellion. Both employers and workman bravely awaited the end of our long trial; and meanwhile the communal authorities, in collaboration with private initiative, endeavoured to diminish the undoubted disadvantages of unemployment. But the occupying power paralysed their efforts. The National Committee tried to organise a form of professional instruction for the use of the unemployed. This course of practical instruction aimed at respecting the dignity of our labourers, at "keeping their hand in," at increasing their professional capacity and so preparing the recovery of our country. Who opposed this noble initiative, the plan of which had been elaborated by our great employers of labour? Who? None but the power in occupation,

Meanwhile the communes made every effort to secure that any work of public use should be performed by the unemployed. But the Governor-General compelled all undertakings of this kind to apply for an authorisation which he generally refused to give. I am assured that cases are not uncommon in which the general government authorised work of this kind on the express con-

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dition that it should not be given to unemployed men.

Unemployment was therefore desired. Recruits were needed for the army of out-of-works.

And yet people dare, after that, to bring the insulting charge of idleness against our workmen!

No, the Belgian workman is not an idler. He is devoted to his work.

He has long since won his spurs in the noble struggles of economic life. It was his patriotic pride that led him to despise the highly paid work offered him by those in occupation. We, the shepherd of our people, who are in closer touch than ever with his sorrows and anxieties, know full well what it has cost him at times to prefer independence in want to prosperity in subjection.

Do not throw stones at the working-man. He has every right to your respect.

The letter of the 26th October states that the chief responsibility for the unemployment of our working-men rests with England, because she prevents raw materials from finding their way into Belgium.

But England generously allows Belgium to receive the means of livelihood under the control of neutral States—Spain, the United States and Holland. Under the same control, she would certainly allow raw materials to enter the country, if Germany would guarantee to leave them with us

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and not to lay hands upon the manufactured products of our industrial labour.

But Germany absorbs a considerable portion of the agricultural and industrial products of our country by various devices, notably through the organisation of its "Central Agencies" which are quite beyond the effective control of Belgians or of the ministers appointed to protect us. From this results a considerable increase in the cost of living, which in turn involves much serious hardship for those without savings to draw upon. The "community of interests" extolled as of such great advantage to us, by the letter in question, is not a normal balance of commercial exchanges, but the predominance of the strong over the weak.

Do not then, I beg you, represent the state of economic inferiority to which we are reduced as a privilege that justifies forced labour on behalf of our enemies and the deportation of multitudes of innocent people into a land of exile.

Did Belgium, which never worked you any harm, deserve from you this treatment that cries for vengeance to Heaven? Slavery and deportation: next to the capital penalty the severest in all the penal code!

Sir, at the beginning of my letter, I recalled the noble expression used by Your Excellency: "I have come to Belgium with the mission of staunching your country's wounds."

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If, like our priests, Your Excellency could visit our working-class homes, and hear the lamentations of the wives and mothers whom these ordinances plunge into mourning and terror, you would realise better than you do that the wounds of the Belgian people are gaping open still!

One hears it said over and over again that, two years ago, it was a question indeed of death, pillage and burning; but it was war after all! To-day it is war no longer, but cold calculation, determined oppression, the triumph of force over right, the degradation of human personality, a defiance to humanity itself.

It is for you, Excellency, to silence these cries of outraged conscience.

May the good God to Whom we appeal with all the ardour of our soul on behalf of our oppressed people, inspire you with something of the pity of the good Samaritan!

Pray accept, Sir, the expression of my deep respect.

(Signed) D. J. CARD. MERCIER,
Archbishop of Malines.

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(5) Discourse pronounced at the Church of S. Gudule, Brussels

“You shall know the truth : and the truth shall make you free.”—John viii. 32.

26 November, 1916.

DEARLY BELOVED BRETHREN,

The last four or five weeks I have just passed have been perhaps the most sorrowful in all my life, the most distressing in all my episcopal career. All fathers and mothers now crowded about this pulpit will understand well what I mean.

The episcopate is a form of spiritual fatherhood. Saint Paul compares it with maternity: “When your souls are in peril,” he writes to the Galatians, “they give me the pains of childbirth.” Now, I have seen my sheep in hundreds exposed to danger, and in tears. For three days—Sunday, Monday and Tuesday last—from morning till evening, I went about these neighbourhoods whence the first working men and artisans in my diocese were forcibly taken away into a land of exile. At Wavre, at Court St. Etienne, Nivelles, Tubize, and Braine-Alléud, I visited more than a hundred half-empty homes. The husband was away, the children were orphans, the sisters were sitting there with dull eyes and listless arms,

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beside their sewing-machines, and a dreary silence reigned in all these cottages. One would have said there was a corpse in the house.

But scarcely had we addressed a word of sympathy (in such cases) to the mother, than sobs burst forth, with lamentations, words of anger and starts of magnificent pride.

The recollection of these piteous scenes is ever with me.

I wish I could run to Antwerp, to Tirlemont, to Aerschot, to Diest—everywhere where they are even now taking place—everywhere where there are sorrows to assuage, tears to dry, and hearts to pacify and calm.

But this I cannot do. My strength and my time betray my goodwill.

And so, my dearly beloved Brethren, I thought that I would come to you, in the centre of my diocese and of our country. You shall yourselves spread my thoughts abroad, and shall be the interpreters of my feelings.

Faithful to the salutation that is familiar to bishops: "*Pax vobis*, peace be with you," I bring you a mesage of peace.

But no peace is possible without order, and order rests upon justice and charity.

We desire order, and for that reason we asked you, from the first, to oppose no active resistance to the occupying power, and to submit, without

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rebellion, to regulations that do not violate either our conscience as Christians, or our dignity as patriots. But the occupying power too must desire order—that is to say, the respect of our own rights and of the engagements it has given. In civilised countries man has a right to liberty in the choice of work. He has a right to his home. He has the right to reserve his services for his own country.

Any regulations that violate these rights do not bind the conscience.

This I say to you, my Brethren, without hatred or thoughts of retaliation. I should be unworthy of this episcopal ring, placed by the Church upon my finger, unworthy of this cross placed by her upon my breast, were I to hesitate, in obedience to any human passion, to proclaim that violated right remains right all the same, and that injustice supported by force is injustice none the less.

Order demands justice. It requires charity as well.

Charity is union. And union, for man, is his law, in that threefold domain of life in which nature and faith give him birth and nurture—I mean, his family, his country, and Christian society as a whole.

Man owes his devotion to his country: the various classes of society must aid one another in national solidarity.

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The Christian belongs to his diocese. Only through the intermediary of his bishop does he belong to the Catholic Church, his mother.

And it is for that reason, my Brethren, that your bishops have broken hearts at present. They have seen thousands of sons torn from their pastoral care, snatched away into the unknown, sheep wandering without a shepherd, a prey to the perils of solitude, of impotent anger, perhaps even of despair.

Then they remembered a certain great historical event. When the Pope Pius VII. was in captivity in Savona, he placed his confidence in his heavenly Mother whom Europe, ever since the victory of Lepanto, called "the Help of Christians." Immediately after his liberation, the Holy Pontiff made a point of affirming, by the institution of a yearly feast in the honour of Our Lady Help of Christians, both his personal piety and the gratitude of all Christendom.

We also humbly ask, through the mediation of the Most Holy Virgin Mary, the Sovereign Master "who reigns in the heavens and in whom all empires depend" to bring us back soon our captive workmen, to keep our homes intact until the time when we are able, in the peace of victory, to gather closely all about the triumphant altar of Mary Giver of Freedom.

Courage, then, my Brethren, be respectful to

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the teaching of Christ. Be faithful to your Belgian land.

To all of you I give, from the bottom of my heart, my paternal benediction.

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(6) Third Letter to Baron von Bissing

November 29, 1916.

TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL.

Sir,

The letter (I, 11254) which Your Excellency did me the honour to write to me, under date November 23rd, is a disappointment to me. In various circles, which I had reason to believe were correctly informed, it was said, Your Excellency, that you had felt it your duty to protest to the highest authorities of the Empire against the measure which you were constrained to apply in Belgium. I counted on at least a delay in the application of these measures, while they were being submitted to fresh examination, and also on some relaxation of the rigour with which they are applied.

And now, Your Excellency, without replying one word to any of the arguments by which I established the illegal and anti-social character of the condemnation of the Belgian working classes to forced labour and to deportation, you confine yourself to repeating, in your telegram of November 23rd, the very text of your letter of October 26th. These two letters are, really, identical in matter and almost in word.

On the other hand the recruiting of the so-called unemployed continues, generally without any

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regard for the observations of the local authorities. Several reports which I have in hand prove that the Clergy are brutally thrust aside, burgomasters and town councillors reduced to silence; the recruiters then find themselves face to face with unknown men among whom they arbitrarily make their choice. There are abundant examples to prove this statement. I will give two recent ones, chosen from a quantity of others which I hold at the disposal of Your Excellency.

On November 21st, recruiting began in the commune of Kersbeek-Miseom. From the 1,325 inhabitants of this commune the recruiters took away, all together, without any distinction of social position or profession, farmers' sons, men who were supporting aged and infirm parents, fathers of families who leave wife and family in misery, each of them as necessary to his family as its daily bread. Two families found themselves deprived each of four sons at once. Among 94 deportees there were only two unemployed.

In the region of Aerschot, recruiting began on November 23rd; at Rillaer, at Gebrede, at Rot-selaer, young men, supporting their widowed mothers, farmers at the head of large families (one of these, who is over 50 years of age, has 10 children working on the land), who possess cattle and have never touched a penny of public money, were taken away by force in spite of all their

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protestations. In the little commune of Rillaer they actually took 25 boys of 17.

Your Excellency wished that the communal councils should become the accomplices of this odious recruiting. By their legal situation and by reason of conscience, they could not do so. But they could have advised the recruiters and are entitled to do it. The priests, who know the working people better than anyone, might have been of the utmost assistance to the recruiters. Why is their help refused?

At the end of your letter, Your Excellency, you remind me that men belonging to liberal professions are not interfered with. If only the unemployed were removed I could understand this exception. But if all able-bodied men continue to be enrolled indiscriminately, the exception is unjustifiable. It would be iniquitous to make the whole weight of the deportations fall upon the working classes. The middle classes must have their part in the sacrifice, however cruel it may be and just because it is cruel, that the occupying power imposes on the nation. A great many members of my clergy have asked me to beg for them a place in the van of the persecuted. I register their offer and submit it to you with pride.

I would wish to believe that the Authorities of the Empire have not said their last word. They will think of our undeserved sorrows, of the repro-

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bation of the civilised world, of the judgment of history and of the chastisement of GOD.

I have the honour to be, Your Excellency, etc.,
etc.

D. J. CARD. MERCIER,
Archbishop of Malines.

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(7) Letter to the Clergy of the Diocese of Malines

MALINES, 19 December, 1916.

GENTLEMEN AND DEAR FELLOW-WORKERS,

In spite of the protests addressed to Germany by the Sovereign Pontiff and several neutral states, the deportation of our civilian population continues.

It is our duty, as far as we can, to soften a calamity we are unable to prevent.

When the Deportation is Announced.

1. As soon as the notices are placarded in your parish, please warn all persons not dependent upon public relief, that they must take their tax papers for the current financial year, and get them attested by the parochial authorities; the sick and feeble must get a certificate of bad health from their doctors; and workmen in employment must ask their employers for a certificate to be countersigned by the Burgomaster.

2. In agreement with the influential people in your parish take special care of the interests of those of your parishioners who must not be deported, according to the instructions of the

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German authorities themselves. Then make arrangements with the parochial authorities, with the Help and Food Supply Committees, and with those of your parishioners who are in easy circumstances and are charitable, to secure for the needy who are likely to have to go such clothes and assistance as they may require.

On the Eve of Departure.

The day before departure, or two days before, invite those about to go, to attend confession. Place yourselves wholly at their disposal. Celebrate for their benefit a mass to which you must invite their children and grandchildren, so that a communion taken by them together with their whole family may be a source of consolation and a sweet memory for them to carry into exile. Especially let them be exhorted to remain true to their faith and to their moral and religious customs during the whole time of their absence, for at home their families will be praying for them.

Give those departing a souvenir of some sort : a rosary, a scapular, or a testament.

Immediately after the Departure

1. Enlist the sympathies of the most charitable men and women of your parishes ; get into touch with the Societies of St. Vincent de Paul, the Association of the Ladies of Mercy, the third order of

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Saint Francis, the congregations, confraternities, and various other charitable organisations attached to the diocesan Federation of catholic women, under the direction of the Abbé Halflants; and unite with them to form, under the direction of the priest or his delegate, a Committee of Moral Aid that must undertake to visit the afflicted families, and to console, advise and succour them. Help them morally; help them materially also, if they need it. The Christian parish is a family, and, when one member of a family suffers, all suffer: when that family is prosperous, all share in its prosperity. So now, there must not be a single neglected or unknown or forgotten home in the parish. This was a duty even in normal times; it is an absolutely essential one in these times of distress. Those who have leisure must help those who have none. The abundance of some must make up for the deficiencies of others. Mutual help, thus understood and practised, is but the fulfilment of Christian law. "Bear ye one another's burdens," says the Apostle Paul, "and so you shall fulfil the law of Christ."

Those priests who need help in their work of charity can come to me, or send to me and ask for it. I should be grateful if they would specify roughly the amount of such help as they are likely to require.

2. We must not spare any effort to secure the

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return home of those who ought to have escaped deportation, according to the declarations of the German Government. An appeal service has been organised to that end in our diocese.

All priests are begged to fill up the enclosed form, of which supplementary copies will be sent to those who apply for them. The forms when filled up should be received at the Deanery, and with the help of the Deans, sent as quickly as possible to the Archbishop's residence.

Will the Deans be so kind as to communicate the following instructions to their colleagues of the Deanery?

At the same time please remind them of our request, dated 11 August, 1914, that they would celebrate a weekly Mass for our soldiers fallen on the field of honour. Charity bids us pray for them and encourage prayer on their behalf.

This, too, will be an opportunity of reviving piety, and a penitent and self-sacrificing spirit, amongst your parishioners, in the service of all those who are in distress or in grief about our soldiers, our wounded, and our absent, our recent refugees, or exiles of to-day; in the service also of our King and his Government, and of our Holy Father the Pope; and I may be bold enough to add, as I do when I end the ceremony of the ordination of priests: "Forget not to pray to Almighty God also for me."

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Accept, dear fellow-workers, the assurance of my affectionate devotion in Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

† D. J. CARD. MERCIER,
Archbishop of Malines.

XI.

The Duty of a Priest

MALINES, Epiphany, 1917.

MY VERY DEAR COLLEAGUES,

MY DEAR SONS,

MY DEAR DAUGHTERS,

Proof of your filial piety, assurance that you pray for our intention, and above all, the communion of our souls in the sorrows of the present hour, benefit me greatly. I will not delay in sending you my thanks.

It seems to me that I have never experienced with such intensity as during these tragic years, the efficacy of the doctrine of the communion of saints.

At times I ask myself if I am not too lavish in my communications with you? But, on the other hand, I am made aware, by your confidences, that any sign of life on our part is pleasant to you, and, at certain times, can contribute to raise or to sustain you. Therefore I gladly listen anew to the exhortations of St. Paul:

“Blessed be the God and Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God

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of all comfort ; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may also be able to comfort them who are in all distress, by the exhortation wherewith we also are exhorted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so by Christ doth our comfort abound. Now whether we be in tribulation, it is for your exhortation and salvation, or whether we be comforted it is for your consolation which worketh the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer. That our hope for you may be steadfast : knowing that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so shall you be also of the consolation.”¹

Swayed by these feelings of tenderness and of strength, which St. Paul always delighted to inspire in the hearts of the faithful in Corinth, and which the law of our apostolic ministry dictates to us, I am conscious of an especially intense desire to draw nearer to you to-day. In good fortune, it is easy to do without our neighbours : success makes one selfish. But in sorrow man feels the ground give way beneath his feet. He calls for help. God and his neighbour become necessary to him.

Thus I find deep consolation in being more closely united than ever, with you, my brothers in the priesthood, and with you, my sons and my daughters, chosen band of the faithful in my

¹ 2 Cor. i. 3, 7.

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diocese. I take my inspiration from the aged apostle St. John, and I venture to follow him in saying to you: "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth. *Majorem (horum) non habeo gratiam, quam ut audiam filios meos in veritate ambulare.*"

As to truth, first. It must stand above everything. Sincerity is the most essential of duties. We cannot, without cowardice, let a lie prevail.

We have protested against violence: you have protested with us to restore the Right that was abused.

We have protested against calumnies that would have transformed executioners into victims, and attributed guilt to the real victims: you joined with us in the re-establishment of the truth. We uttered our protest on behalf of the safe-guarding of the right to choose one's residence and work. We demanded respect for the dignity of humanity: and you, all the while, remained faithfully at my side.

Let us bless God that He has made you understand your task so well, since it is no less than the fulfilment of the fundamental law of Christianity.

I cannot admit that, under the pretext of a need for greater retirement in piety, the Christian should isolate himself, in a disdainful detachment, and contemplate the war, from outside, as if it could

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only affect souls of a secondary quality. Faith should impregnate the whole life, the intercourse of individuals and that of societies. The events of history, great or small, resounding or hidden, are all in the service of the highest work of divine Providence, the Church of Christ.

What then, is this Church which Christ has founded, and which is animated by His Holy Spirit?

The society of believers, which, united to our Holy Father the Pope through the episcopacy, is thus attached to Christ Himself. Your bishop, whatever his personality and his origin, as soon as he has been chosen by the Holy Spirit and established by the Sovereign Pontiff in the circumscription of a diocese, to rule the Church of God, is the living link by which everyone of your souls is in community of life with the Christ, and by the Christ, with God. Faith, Hope, Charity, all the treasures of supernatural mercy, descend upon you from our Christ Jesus and His Vicar through your bishop, and it is through your bishop, again, united to the successor of Peter, that your beliefs, your aspirations, and your obedience, ascend to our Saviour Jesus Christ and as far as the Throne of God.

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and our hands have

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handled," that mystery which we announce to you, in what, asks St. John of himself, is it summed up? In that you enter into community with us, replies the inspired author, that is to say with the apostles or the bishops, their successors—"and our Fellowship is with the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ."¹

It is then no longer question of either Jew or Gentile, either bond or free; all distinctions of race, language, social condition, are effaced, all baptised souls find themselves in the same association, at once spiritual and visible, united to Christ and God by the intermediary of the Catholic and Roman episcopacy.

Not, my brothers, that this episcopal dignity creates any human privilege in him in whom it dwells. Far from it. Whoever is placed in authority becomes, in this matter, your servant. Your bishop must not excuse you from due respect or obedience: with Christ Jesus, and in His Name, he even demands them and thanks you for bestowing them upon him. But you have rights over him. The day on which the bishop sends to you, in his turn, a parish priest, a college director, a chaplain-ordinary of the hospital, a governor of a religious house, those men, who take authority over you, belong to you also. Their thoughts, their affections, their work, their time, their prayers, their sufferings above all, belong to you, their sub-

¹ 1 John i. 3.

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ordinates, and you have the right to dispose of them as you may.

The Good Shepherd is recognised, says our Saviour, by this double sign—that he does not desert his flock in the hour of danger and that he does not exploit it to his profit as a mercenary would. On the contrary, he places his life at the disposal of his sheep. *Bonus Pastor animam suam dat pro ovibus suis.*

And because there is no greater thing than to give one's life for the good of others, the condition of the pastor who engages himself without reserve and forever in the service of God and of his brethren, is, of all conditions imaginable, the most perfect.

And for you, pious souls who make public profession of your aspiration towards Christian perfection, you are the first and the most powerful auxiliaries of the episcopal ministry. Thus it is chiefly in you, in your works, in your prayers, in your penitence, that, next to the mercy of God, we place our Christian confidence. Give us your help. I speak in my name and in the names of my colleagues in the priesthood. Help us. Secure for us the grace of constancy in our sublime but terrible vocation. Pity us. Ransom our infidelities from the fount of grace. Supplement our insufficiencies. Sacrifice yourselves for us, sanctify yourselves for us, according to the example of

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your divine Saviour. May we all, bishops, priests, pious souls, profit by the great and hard lessons of the present hour, and strengthen our souls in the spirit of sacrifice.

We used not to give enough thought to all this. The world does not understand this truth, and we ourselves did not confront it boldly enough. The work of the redemption of the world, in which it is our honourable mission to collaborate, is but a work of labour and pious supplication. It is, above all, a work of sacrifice. One may conjecture, most assuredly, that our divine Saviour might have made Himself man, and might have come to take His delight amongst us, even if humanity had not sinned. But the fact, *historically, unquestionably* ascertained, is that the Word made itself flesh in the bosom of the Virgin Mary, to buy back guilty humanity by its Passion and by its death. *Propter nos homines, et propter nostram salutem descendit de coelis, et incarnatus est de Spiritu Sancto ex Maria Virgine et homo factus est. Crucifixus etiam pro nobis sub Pontio -Pilato passus et sepultus est.*

That is not all. Suffering and dying on the Cross for our redemption, our divine Saviour might have taken on Himself alone the burden of our iniquities. A single act of the God, made man, would have been of infinite value and might have sufficed for the expiation of all our sins.

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But, once again, divine Providence did not so will it. And, God be thanked, all noble souls on that account will bless the plan of the Eternal Father. The sacrifice of Calvary is an example. "I have given you an example," says the Master, *Exemplum dedi vobis*, "that as I have done to you so you do also."¹ The children of God, brothers in Christ, are invited to reproduce in their lives this divine Model, and all should imitate it within certain limits. Our well beloved Redeemer has desired that in the Church which is His mystic Body, there shall continue till the end of time the Passion which He inaugurated in His mortal Body. St. Paul expressly says so: "Who now rejoice," he writes to the Colossians, "in my sufferings for you, and fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ, in my flesh, for His Body, which is the Church; whereof I am made a minister according to the dispensation of God, which is given me towards you, that I may fulfil the word of God.² *Qui nunc gaudeo in passionibus pro vobis, et adimpleo ea, quæ desunt passionum Christi, in carne mea, pro corpore ejus, quod est Ecclesia, cujus factus sum minister.*"

The Christian is not an isolated being, lost in the void at a transient moment of time. He lives in the immortal life of the Church to which he

¹ John xiii. 15.

² Col. i. 24, 25.

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belongs, and he partakes of all its phases of birth, growth, effort, destruction and resurrection. The work of the Church—the work at once of Christ and of His members—is the redemption of the world. And because the institutions of Providence flourish in the degree in which they obey the spirit of their founder, we must absorb the spirit of Christ and lay wide open to the action of the Holy Spirit, accept our part of the Passion of our divine Saviour, before laying claim to the honour of partaking in the triumph of His Resurrection, of His Ascension, and of His reign at the right hand of His eternal Father. Listen to these words of the author of the Imitation of Jesus Christ: *Qui non est paratus omnia pati et ad voluntatem stare Delecti non meretur amator appellari*. If you do not give up your soul to suffering without reserve, if you do not respond to all the desires of our God of love with firmness, say not, and permit it not to be said of you, that you love Him.¹

My dear brethren in office, my dear sons and daughters consecrated to God, the war will work great changes in our European society. May it not be without effect upon our souls! Let us renew what is to-day commonly called our mentality—that is, the guiding conceptions of our lives.

Let us once more go back to the Gospel. Let us contemplate our divine Redeemer. Let us make

¹Imt. J.C. Lib. III. cap. iv. 6.

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enquiry of the Church and share in its supernatural life. We had grown used to our labours. We loved prayer. We did not refuse, on certain days and at certain times, to perform obligatory works of penitence, or certain supererogatory acts of mortification. But let us confess that renouncement, humiliation, and suffering, were regarded by us rather as a noble accessory, or as a sort of covering or decoration for our lives. Now this is not so at all. Christianity is essentially a death which leads to a life; the death of the old man which gives birth to the new man; the decomposition in the earth of the grain of wheat, out of which germinates a life of greater fruitfulness. Christianity is the work of Christ who has acquired, by His death, the right to unite our souls with Him, and to pour His own life into them by means of the effusion in us of His Holy Spirit. Our lives should therefore reproduce, above all, the sacrifice of Christ. Our personal sanctification and the success of apostolic mission depend entirely upon this. There lies the secret of the share of influence we shall have in the formidable task of future reconstruction. It is in the meditation of that thought that we, celebrants and assistants alike, should every morning utter the liturgical prayer: *Introibo ad altare Dei*. "I shall ascend the steps of God's altar, the altar raised to the divine Majesty, the altar on which the Man-God renews

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His sacrifice with the co-operation of the soul, the lips and the hands of His priests; *ad Deum qui lætificat juventutem mean*. I will go to God who giveth joy to my youth."¹

While we wish one another a holy and happy year, we should thus not desire, either for ourselves or for those whom we love, a life of comfort, but the grace to clasp sorrow and humiliation, and to fulfil a career as like as possible to that which Our Lord Jesus Christ began and followed out in front of us, marking it at each step by His tears, His sweat, and the stains of His blood.

Let us keep our eyes constantly fixed upon Our Jesus, Who, according to the word of St. Paul, made Himself "the author and finisher of faith, who having joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and now sitteth on the right hand of the throne of God."²

This grace closely to imitate our divine Model, we shall ask in common through the intercession of the Blessed Mary, Virgin and Mother, who has given us to possess within us the Author of Life, our Lord Jesus Christ, *ut ipsam pro nobis intercedere sentiamus per quam meruimus Auctorem vitæ suscipere Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum*.

† D. J. CARD. MERCIER,
Archbishop of Malines.

¹ Psalm xlii. 4.

² Heb. xii. 2.

XII.

“Courage, My Brethren!”

In Rome the Epiphany is the great festival of children. On this occasion Roman families have had the touching idea of opening a subscription for little Belgians. The most important Catholic newspaper in Rome, the *Corriere d'Italia*, has sent us the amount of this subscription, 40,000 francs, in aid of families who have suffered from the war and deportation. Our mothers will make a point of asking their children to offer a prayer to the Blessed Virgin for the little Romans.

SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY, 1917.

Feast of the Apparition of Our Lady of Lourdes.

“COURAGE, MY BRETHREN!”

WORDS OF MORAL AND CHRISTIAN EXHORTATION

SUMMARY: I. **Moral greatness of the Belgian Nation:** Valour of the army and of prisoners; patience of the refugees; heroic resistance of the deported; firmness of the Government; the example of the Sovereign.—A few shadows on the picture; they will fade away, as men look back upon them from the more distant standpoint of History, leav-

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ing in sight only the moral beauty of the nation, its patriotic ardour, its tenacity.—The educative value of these great examples for future generations.

II. **Christian greatness:** The natural moral virtues are to be esteemed: Sentiments of Christ and of the Church on this point.—Nevertheless, it is only the charity which Christ pours into the soul, that gives virtue its full significance, and, strictly speaking, merits Paradise.—Your dead exhort you to live as Christians.—Have a Christian sense of your ordeal; it is the realisation of a design of divine love; have faith in the love of God, in the evidences of His Son's love.

III. **Conclusions.** 1st CONCLUSION: Not to doubt God's love for us. You do not perhaps understand it; but is it surprising that the finite should not understand the infinite?—Read your Psalter.

2nd CONCLUSION: Act of adoration, submission, and love to our Father, who is in Heaven, to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

I. **Moral Grandeur of the Nation.**

MY BELOVED BRETHREN,

Is it indeed necessary to preach courage to you?

And when I say "you," I am thinking more immediately of the faithful companions of our misfortunes, but my thoughts go out also beyond

"COURAGE, MY BRETHREN"

our occupied provinces to our refugees, our prisoners, our deported fellow-countrymen, and our soldiers.

Brethren of our armies of Liège, Haelen, Antwerp, the Yser and Ypres, the Cameroons and East Africa, it is you who are our foremost purveyors of energy. On August 2, 1914, you sprang up from the bosom of all the families of our national aristocracy with splendid ardour, attesting to the world at large that the nobility has preserved its traditional significance in Belgium; the middle classes, the bulwarks of the nation, ranged themselves beside you; a modest *employé* of our city of Mechlin has six sons at the front; the working classes, too, furnished their contingent of voluntary recruits, all the more praiseworthy, since their departure made a painful void in the home; military chaplains and stretcher-bearers have gladly offered and lavished their devotion; the Government, after two years and six months of trial, is still in harness, with a courage that nothing can weaken; our good wishes follow in the wake of these valiant men; all form a guard of honour, proud and faithful, for our magnanimous Sovereign, who, from the sand-bank which is now all his kingdom, gives to Belgium and to the whole world a perfect example of endurance and of faith in the future.

Those who are fighting for the liberty of the

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Belgian flag are brave men. Those interned in Holland and Germany, who raise their fettered hands to Heaven on behalf of their country, are brave men. Our exiled compatriots, who bear in silence the weight of their isolation, also serve their Belgian fatherland to the best of their ability, as do also all those souls who, either behind the cloister-walls or in the retirement of their own homes, pray, toil, and weep, awaiting the return of their absent ones, and our common deliverance.

We have listened to the mighty voices of wives and mothers ; through their tears they have prayed God to sustain the courage and fidelity to honour of their husbands and sons, carried off by force to the enemy's factories. These gallant men have been heard at the hour of departure, rallying their energy to instil courage into their comrades, or, by a supreme effort, to chant the national hymn ; we have seen some of them on their return, pale, haggard human wrecks ; as our tearful eyes sought their dim eyes we bowed reverently before them, for all unconsciously they were revealing to us a new and unexpected aspect of national heroism.

After this, can it be necessary to preach courage to you?

True, there are some shadows in the picture I have sketched for you ; there have been weaknesses here and there among our people for which we must blush ; I am not referring, be it clearly under-

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stood, to the handful of workmen, exhausted by privation, stiff with cold, or crushed by blows, who at last gave utterance to a word of submission; there are limits to human energy. I refer, with deep regret, to the few malefactors who lend themselves to the lucrative parts of informer, courtier, or spy, and to those misguided individuals who are not ashamed to trade upon the poverty of their compatriots. Happily, when future generations look back from the more distant standpoint of History, these blots will die out, and all that will remain for their edification will be the splendid spectacle of a nation of seven millions, which, on the evening of August 2, with one accord not only refused to allow its honour to be held in question for a moment, but which, throughout over thirty months of ever-increasing moral and physical suffering, on battlefields, in military and civil prisons, in exile, under an iron domination, has remained imperturbable in its self-control, and has never once so far yielded as to cry: This is too much! This is enough!

In our young days our professors of history rightly held up to our admiration Leonidas and the three hundred Spartans, who, instead of seeking safety in easy flight, allowed themselves to be crushed by the Persian army at the Pass of Thermopylæ. They filled us with enthusiasm for the six hundred heroes of Franchimont, who, after

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risking life and liberty by passing through the camp of the armies of Louis XI. and Charles the Bold at night, all fell in an assault of almost frenzied valour and desperate resistance. The teachers of the Belgian generation of to-morrow will have yet other instances of military heroism and patriotism to evoke. And may we not hope that our generation, too, will preserve the memory of the union it has now fashioned, and that in future there will be among us all a deeper wish for national unity, less personal acrimony in the conflict of ideas, a less grudging respect for civil and religious authority, in a word, a more general fidelity, both before public opinion and in the secret recesses of the soul, to our motto: "Union is strength," an echo of the words of Christ: "*Ut omnes unum sint*"¹, "that they may be one."

II. Christian Greatness.

Nevertheless, my Brethren, we must rise still higher.

True, the natural moral virtues are worthy of all admiration, and he who should refuse them such admiration would be fatuous indeed.

At various periods of unrest there have been arrogant minds which have despised human nature, its resources and its achievements. But Christ and the Church honour it. Our Lord Jesus Christ

¹ S. John xvii. 21.

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came not to destroy nature, but to correct its aberrations, and to raise it to a higher level.

Did not Greece give the world thinkers of genius? Is not the wisdom of ancient Rome proverbial? Did not pagan art produce masterpieces which Christian generations have never wearied of admiring and copying? The great Popes Leo XIII. and Pius X. protected classic literature against those who wished to abolish it in Christian education; and in one of his masterly Encyclicals, Leo XIII. expressly enjoined Catholic philosophers to profit by the thought and science of others, no matter where they found them.

Intelligence is no more exclusively Christian than are physical health, capacity for work, initiative, energy, or wealth. These gifts of nature are not even bound up with virtue. God, says the Gospel, maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.¹

As to moral virtue—bravery, for instance, constancy, philanthropy, patriotism in its multiple forms—you must greet it with gratitude and respect wherever you find it. Christianity has no monopoly of it. Nature is not incapable of it, and moreover, the supernatural graces are not exclusively reserved for members of the Catholic Church. It is well to be proud of your faith, but do not imitate the

¹ S. Matt. v. 4, 5.

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Pharisee who boasted that he was not like other men, and looked down upon the poor publican on whom the God of mercy took pity. "Finally, brethren," says S. Paul, "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever modest, whatsoever just, whatsoever holy, whatsoever lovely, whatsoever of good fame, think on [appreciate] these things."¹ "Loving one another," he says elsewhere, "with honour preventing one another, *diligentes honore invicem prævenientes*;"² better still, be humble enough to think your neighbour superior to yourself; you will become convinced of this, if, instead of taking pleasure in what is good in yourself, you endeavour to look at what is good in others: *in humilitate superiores sibi invicem arbitantes, non quæ sua sunt singuli considerantes, sed ea quæ aliorum* (in humility let all esteem others better than themselves. Each one not considering the things that are his own, but those that are other men's).³

Nevertheless, my Brethren, when virtue is not inspired by Christian charity, it lacks its chief element. It is not enough, in short, to do good; we must do good aright; now we can only do it aright when we have brought it to a degree of perfection which makes it deserving of eternal life. Saint Augustine devoted the greater part of his dogmatic and polemical writings to establishing, as

¹ Philipp. iv. 8.

² Rom. xii. 10.

³ Philipp. ii. 3, 4.

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against the rationalists of his day, Pelagians or semi-Pelagians, this fundamental truth: that only works inspired by charity, that is to say, by the love of God, and the love of one's neighbour in the sight of God, have power to open the gates of Paradise to us. The holy doctor would not permit an act of mere natural goodness to be qualified without reservation as “virtuous.” “To sum up,” he wrote, “virtue is identical with charity, and consists in loving what we ought to love.” *Virtus est charitas, qua id quod diligendum est, diligitur.*¹

Indeed, did not our Lord Himself declare and insist that all the commandments of God are comprised in the law of love? And does not S. Paul say that love is the fulfilling of the law, *plenitudo ergo legis est dilectio*?²

Christianity has not transformed moral greatness, but it has ameliorated, completed, and raised it to that supreme height where it is in immediate contact with God. The soul which possesses charity lives the divine life. God lives in it, and it in God. Jesus Christ is the living bond between it and the Holy Trinity. Thenceforth, the natural worship of morality and of religion cannot suffice; God no longer accepts it. It is through Christ, Who sheds the effusions of His life supernaturally into our souls, it is with Christ and in Christ—*per Ipsum*

¹ Epist. ad S. Hieron. 167a ed. Vives.

² Rom. xiii. 10.

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et cum Ipso, et in Ipso—that all honour and glory must rise towards God the Father Almighty in the unity of the Holy Spirit, for ever, in time and in eternity: *Per Ipsum et cum Ipso et in Ipso, est tibi Deo Patri Omnipotenti, in unitate Spiritus Sancti, omnis honor et gloria, per omnia saecula saeculorum.*¹

How sad it would be, my Brethren, to think that the sufferings endured for nearly three years by millions of immortal souls, would, perhaps in a very considerable number of cases, be lost to eternity! The glory of military successes is, no doubt, enviable; heroism in patience, privation, loss of liberty, and even in the presence of death, is certainly admirable; but the artificers of this glory, those who engendered this heroism, would be greatly to be pitied, if at the turning-point of eternity, suddenly confronted by those sovereign realities they had refused to believe in, they should have to confess, in despair: Fools that we were! We treated the modest lives of the Christians around us as folly; we thought they lacked brilliance, and behold! it is they who now take place among the children of God and in the triumphant assembly of saints. We were deceived then. We did not follow the way of truth, our eyes did not recognise the light of justice, the sun of intelligence did not shine upon us. *Nos insensati, vitam*

¹ End of the Canon of the Mass.

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*illorum aestimabamus insaniam et finem illorum sine honore. Ecce quomodo computati sunt inter filios Deos, et inter sanctos sors illorum est. Ergo erravimus a via veritatis, et justitiæ lumen non luxit nobis, et sol intelligentiæ non est ortus nobis.*¹

Those who are on the other side of the barrier of Time, our dead of yesterday, of past centuries, would gladly send us a messenger charged to tell us what the rich man of the parable desired to tell his brethren: You have still a span of life before you; you are within reach of the confessional, where the divine Saviour of the world remits sins by the ministry of His priests, of your parish church, where you can so easily go to pray, and to ask our Lord in His tabernacle, and His Mother, the refuge of sinners, the Mother of divine grace, the almighty mediator for humanity, to grant you the grace of conversion or of perseverance; I entreat you, in the name of your dearest interests, in the name of the affection you bear me, in the name of the tears you shed over my lot, in the name of the deep joy we shall feel when we meet again to part no more, once more I entreat you, be converted, sanctify yourselves, live the lives of Christians and of saints.

* * *

My Brethren, if our ordeal is prolonged, it is

¹ Wisdom v. 4-6.

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because the design of divine Love is not yet accomplished.

The design of Providence is a design of love, doubt it not. It is carrying out for some a work of justice, for others a work of mercy; but for all it is, in the divine intention, a work of love.

In God, all attributes are substantially identical. God is Omnipotence, but His omnipotence could not exist without wisdom, and the wisdom of the Almighty is not separable from His love. He can do all things, He knows all things, but He only wills by love. Theology ascribes Omnipotence to the Father, Omniscience to the Son, the Word of the Father; and all-embracing Love to the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and the Word; but the works of creation and of Providence have as their Author the unique nature of God, in Whom the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity subsist indissolubly.

Do not forget your baptismal faith. Believe in God. Believe in love, which really is God. *Deus charitas est.*¹

Believe in the sayings of the Word: He came to reveal the love of God to the world, and in order to convince us and bring us to Him, He deigned to carry the evidences of His love before our eyes and hearts, far beyond that which the most rigorous divine justice could have demanded for the redemp-

¹ S. John iv. 8.

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tion of mankind. For whereas a prayer, a sigh, a tear would have sufficed for the salvation of humanity, our Christ Jesus strove to conquer our souls by every means that could touch and move us, that could make us love Him, and pass, by Him, to the love of His Father.

Need I remind you, Brethren, of the Babe of Bethlehem, for Whom His parents did not even demand the humblest place in an inn ; of the Flight through the desert into Egypt, under the threat of murderous persecution ; of a childhood and youth spent under a humble roof, in the obscurity of a workshop ; of the fatigues of a ministry exposed to the opposition of the Scribes and Pharisees, the ingratitude of the masses, the obstinate prepossessions of the Disciples and Apostles ; finally, of that last week, into which, rushing one upon the other like the waters of a torrent, were crowded the Agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, the treachery of Judas on the very evening of the institution of that Sacrament we so rightly call the Sacrament of Love, and the institution of the priesthood, the choice between Jesus and Barabbas, the frenzy of the crowd, blaspheming Him Whom but yesterday they had acclaimed with triumphant Hosannas, the scenes in the Prætorium and in the court of Herod : our gentle Lord's back and shoulders scourged with rods, His head lacerated by the crown of thorns, His face defiled by spitting and swollen by buffeting ;

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the whole adorable person of the Man-God outraged and mocked, rendered what the prophetic psalm describes as "a reproach of men, and the outcast of the people," *abjectio plebis*,¹ or as Tertullian has it, "one who is of no more account," *nullificamen plebis*; then the ascent to Calvary, the swooning of the victim under the weight of the cross; the desertion by all the Apostles save S. John; the Crucifixion; the Messiah exposed to public derision between two thieves, in sight of His Mother,—a martyr with Him; all suffering, physical and moral, heaped upon a single head, even to the sense of total abandonment which drew from the dying lips that sigh of supreme distress: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" "*Deus meus, Deus meus ut quid dereliquisti me!*"² My Brethren, you who pass so often before the crucifix, pause for a moment, "and see if there be any sorrow like to this sorrow." "*Vos omnes qui transitis per viam, attendite et videte si est dolor sicut dolor meus.*"³

"God so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him may not perish, but have life everlasting." "*Sic enim Deus dilexit mundum, ut Filium suum unigenitum daret, ut omnis, qui credit in eum, non pereat, sed habeat vitam aeternam.*"⁴

¹ Psalm xxii. 6.

² Mark xv. 34.

³ Lamentations i. 1.

⁴ S. John iii. 16.

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Christians, do you not hear resounding in your souls the challenge of Jehovah to His chosen people, of the vine-dresser to his vineyard: "Inhabitants of Jerusalem and ye men of Judah," He says by the mouth of the Prophet Isaiah, "judge, between me and my vineyard. What is there that I ought to do more to my vineyard that I have not done to it? *Quid est quod debui ultra facere vineae meae et non feci?*"¹ And do we not understand how the Apostle Paul, about to die for the love of his Saviour, ventured to cry: "If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ let him be anathema. *Si quis non amat Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum, sit anathema.*"²

III. Conclusions.

1ST CONCLUSION: *Believe in the divine love.*

My Brethren, you cannot doubt the love of God for you; you cannot doubt that all He does is well-done, that it is the work at once of His Power, His Wisdom, His Love, the work of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

You cannot at the present moment understand the why and wherefore of all the events which His Providence ordains or permits: it is not required of you to understand them. Is it surprising, I ask you, that the finite should fail to understand the infinite; that the child, lisping the first letters of

¹ Isaiah v. 3.

² 1 Cor. xvi. 22.

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the alphabet, should not grasp the meaning of the great Book of History ; that the spectator of a sunrise and a sunset should not take in the meaning of eternity ?

If indeed, you could understand, you would not need to believe ; and it is God's will that you should believe, that your faith should be meritorious for you, and glorious for Him. The holy man Job, whom the Scriptures offer as a pattern to suffering souls, was absolutely right in refusing to listen to his wife and his friends, who urged him to rebel, on the pretext that the trials which had overwhelmed a faithful servant of God were senseless chastisements. "If we have received good at the hand of God," replied the martyr, "why should we not receive evil? *Si bona suscepimus de manu Dei, mala quare non suscipiamus?*"¹

In other words, it is not for us to judge whether a thing is good or evil ; the main point is not to know whether it pleases or displeases us. Our point of view is too restricted, our horizon too limited, our faculty of judgment too uncertain, to enable us to pronounce wisely upon the bearing and value of providential events.

There is a much safer course, the only truly safe one, that is, to keep our own place, in the humility proper to our incompetence and our inferiority, and to leave to God sovereign autonomy, understand-

¹ Job ii. 10.

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ing, and love. The holy king David, whose life was so full of trials, was often troubled at the sight of the insolent prosperity of his persecutors and enemies; he poured out his doubts, his anguish, and his grief in his Psalms; but Faith triumphed in him, and finally led him to these outbursts of loving confidence: “What have I in heaven? And besides Thee what do I desire upon earth? For Thee my flesh and my heart hath fainted away. Thou art the God of my heart and the God that is my portion for ever. For behold! they that go far from Thee shall perish . . . but it is good for me to adhere to my God; to put my hope in the Lord God.”¹

If you are tempted to be sceptical, my Brethren, take your Psalter; read and meditate upon a few Psalms; your faith will revive, and almost involuntarily, you will begin to pray.

2ND CONCLUSION. *Act of adoration, submission, and love.*

Pater Noster, Our Father: My God, the first thought I will contemplate when, in sorrow as in joy, I lift up my soul to Thee, is that Thou art my Father, that I am Thy Child, that between Thee

¹ *Quid enim mihi est in coelo? Et a te quid volui super terram? Defecit caro mea et cor meum: Deus cordis mei, et pars mea Deus in aeternum. Quia ecce qui elongant se a te, peribunt. . . . Mihi autem adhaere Deo bonum est; ponere in Domine Deo spem meam.* Psalm lxxii. 25-28.

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and me, thanks to Thine ineffable condescension, there are family relations. It is as a child with his father that I wish to live with Thee. I do not doubt Thee, any more than I doubt my own father and mother; I have less confidence in my own father and mother than in Thee, because my father and mother are often unable to give me the good things they would bestow upon me, whereas, O my Father in Heaven, nothing can resist Thy sovereign will.

Our Father who art in Heaven: It is not upon earth, in the restricted space of a shelter made by the hand of man, that the family life of God's children developes. Heaven is the region above matter, above the reason of the feeble human creature; it is the spirit, of which baptismal grace has made a temple; it is the bosom of the divine Trinity, where the Christian soul, transformed by Faith, Hope and Charity, and by the gifts of the Holy Spirit, breathes in God, believes in God, and expands in God, until it attains the stature allotted to it by the design of eternal predestination.

Hallowed be Thy Name: My God, Thou art essential sanctity, and as such, inaccessible to a miserable and sinful creature. Thou art infinitely above us. Thy Majesty, enthroned in the holy temple of its glory, transcends our vain efforts to praise and glorify it. *Benedictus es in templo sanctae gloriae tuae, et superlaudabilis et super-*

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*gloriosus in saecula.*¹ But O, unfathomable depth of divine Love, Mystery which comprises all mysteries, Thou wast pleased to bring us forth from the void, to bend down towards us, to enfold us with Thy love, to offer us a share in Thy life and Thy felicity. There is, however, a condition attached to this deification of our souls: we must believe that Thou lovest us, we must have faith in Christ, the supreme revelation of divine Love; we must believe in Thy Love, O Jesus, as the friend believes in his friend, the child in his mother, the wife in her husband. This faith is the highest glorification of the Holy Name of God: *Sanctificetur nomen tuum. Hallowed be Thy Name.*

Thy Kingdom come: My soul is a temple for Thee, my Saviour, may it also be a kingdom for Thee! I am and will be Thy subject. Reign supremely over me. If I have sometimes turned away from Thee, if I have even rebelled against Thee, it was because I did not know Thee. Happily for me, my God, Thou art not estranged either by the cowardice or by the revolts of my nature. Thou askest only my faith, and a loyal will under the guidance of faith and the inspiration of Thy love. Lord, I believe, I would believe, help Thou mine unbelief.² Overcome my resistance. I know that Thou subduest me only in order to love me. To submit myself to Thee is to make myself

¹ Dan. iv. 3.

² S. Mark ix. 24.

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beloved by Thee; it is to leave Thee free to realise my happiness, even in spite of myself. Dispose of me, Lord, break down in me, either with or against my own will, all obstacles to the invasion and the triumph of Thy Love.

Thy Will be done on earth as it is in Heaven: My will belongs to Thee, I sacrifice it to Thee. What Thou wilt is good, always good; what I will may not be so. My will must bow to Thine. Subdue it, purify it, transform it. The saints and angels in Heaven see and acclaim Thine infinite wisdom. I do not see it, but I believe in it. I bless Thy will, past and present. I await in loving confidence, Thy future will. There is no event which does not bring us a message of love, an offer of union, a pledge of beatitude from Thee. All the designs of Providence are merciful and faithful, as the Psalmist tells us, but to experience this, we must enter into the divine covenant and desire to receive its testimonies. *Universae viae Domini misericordia et veritas requirentibus testamentum ejus et testimonia ejus.*¹

May the name of the Lord be blessed now and ever! *Sit Nomen Domini benedictum ex hoc nunc et usque in saeculum!*

Signed † D. J. CARD. MERCIER,
ARCHBISHOP OF MECHLIN.

¹ Psalm xxv. 10.

“COURAGE, MY BRETHREN!”

Lenten Indult, 1917.

The double precept of fasting and abstinence is suspended throughout the whole of Lent this year, except on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. Nevertheless, we warmly advise all those who are able to do so, to make a free will offering to God of fasting and abstinence every Wednesday and Friday throughout Lent.

II. The eating of fish and meat at the same meal is prohibited, even on Sundays. Soldiers, however, are allowed to eat both fish and meat at the same meal.

III. Milk and butter are allowed every day.

IV. Eggs are allowed every day, even at several meals.

V. Three Paters and three Aves must be repeated, and the acts of faith, hope, charity and contrition must be repeated once on every day when these dispensations are enjoyed. This obligation may, however, be commuted by the offering of an alms according to conscience, to be put into the Lenten alms-box, and to be devoted to works of charity, according to our judgment and the customs of this diocese.

We desire, that every week during Lent, preferably on Fridays, there should be a procession of the Way of the Cross, followed by benediction of the most Holy Sacrament. At each Station, a priest will offer homage to Justice and Mercy from the

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pulpit, and kindle devotion to our Saviour Jesus Christ and His Sacred Heart in the hearts of the congregation.

We recommend our clergy and the faithful very urgently, to celebrate the festival of S. Joseph, the patron saint of Belgium, with the utmost solemnity and devotion.

The present Pastoral Letter is to be read in all churches and chapels of the diocese, immediately after its reception. If it is read in two instalments, on the first Sunday, the first part of the summary, and the text down to the words "Live as Christians, live as saints" are to be read; on the second Sunday, the whole of the summary, and the text from the words "If our ordeal is prolonged" to the end.

Given at Mechlin, under our signature and seal, and the counter-signature of our Secretary.

† D. J. CARD. MERCIER, ARCH. OF MECHLIN.

By command of H.E. the Cardinal Arch-Bishop.

D. Van Messem, Secretary.

